NATION

'Pak's ISI uses drug addicts as terror couriers in Indian jails'

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BUSINESS

11 firms to launch IPOs this week, target Rs 18,500 cr

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SPORTS

Gukesh beats Ding Liren to take lead in WC

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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Opposition fighters celebrate the take over of Damascus, Syria, on Sunday; A family takes a selfie while sitting on a couch in Syrian President Bashar Assad's presidential palace; People wear face masks depicting Assad in Wuppertal, Germany; A rebel steps on the broken bust of late Syrian president Hafez Assad ***PHOTOS: PTI***

SYRIA REBELS OUST ASSAD, END 50 YEARS OF TYRANNY

Sources say Assad may have been killed in plane crash during escape

DAMASCUS, 8 DEC

The Syrian government collapsed on early Sunday, falling to a lightning rebel offensive that seized control of the capital of Damascus and sent crowds into the streets to celebrate the end of the Assad family's 50 years of iron rule.

A Syrian plane took off from Damascus around the time rebels reportedly seized the capital, sparking speculation that ousted President Bashar al-Assad may have been onboard. The aircraft briefly headed toward Assad's Alawite stronghold before making a sudden U-turn and vanishing from radar, according to Flightradar data. Two Syrian sources suggest Assad may have died in a crash, though Reuters could not confirm who was onboard.

Syrian opposition fighters celebrate after the Syrian government collapsed in Damascus, Syria, on Sunday ***PHOTO: PTI***

Syrian state television aired a video statement by a group of men saying that President Bashar Assad had been overthrown and all detainees in jails had been set free.

The statement emerged hours after the head of a Syrian opposition war monitor said Assad had left the country for an undisclosed location, fleeing ahead of insurgents who said they had entered Damascus following a remarkably swift advance across the country.

Crowds gathered to pray in the city's mosques and to celebrate in the squares, chanting "God is great." People also chanted anti-Assad slogans and honked car horns. Soldiers and police officers left their posts and fled, and looters broke into the headquarters of the Ministry of Defense. Videos from Damascus showed families wandering into the presidential palace, with some emerging carrying stacks of plates and other household items.

Rami Abdurrahman of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Syrian opposition war monitor, said Assad took a flight from Damascus and left early Sunday. There was no immediate official statement from the Syrian government and Assad's whereabouts remain unknown.

Syria's al-Watan newspaper, wrote: "We are facing a new page for Syria. We thank God for not shedding more blood. We believe and trust that Syria will be for all Syrians." Iran, which had strongly backed President Bashar Assad's deposed government, says Syrians should decide their country's future without "without destructive, coercive, foreign intervention." Russia's Foreign Ministry claimed Sunday that Bashar Assad had left Syria after negotiations with rebel groups, and gave "instructions" to "transfer power peacefully". *—PTI*

Who is rebel group leader Abu Md al-Golani?

Abu Mohammed al-Golani, the militant leader whose stunning insurgency toppled Syria's President Bashar Assad, has spent years working to remake his public image, renouncing longtime ties to al-Qaida and depicting himself as a champion of pluralism and tolerance.

In recent days, the insurgency even dropped his nom de guerre and began referring to him by his real name, Ahmad al-Sharaa.

The extent of that transformation from jihadi extremist to would-be state builder is now put to the test.

The 42-year-old al-Golani -- labeled a terrorist by the United States -- has not appeared publicly since Damascus fell early Sunday. But he and his insurgent force, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS – many of whose fighters are jihadis -- stand to be a major player.

For years, al-Golani worked to consolidate power, while bottled up in the province of Idlib in Syria's northwest corner as Assad's Iranian- and Russian-backed rule over much of the country appeared solid.

He maneuvered among extremist organisations while eliminating competitors and former allies. "Syria deserves a governing system that is institutional, no one where a single ruler makes arbitrary decisions," he said in an interview with CNN last week, offering the possibility HTS would eventually be dissolved after Assad falls.

India to set up anti-drone unit for border security

JODHPUR, 8 DEC

Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced on Sunday that India will soon establish a comprehensive anti-drone unit to enhance border security, citing the growing threat of unmanned aerial vehicles. Speaking at the Border Security Force (BSF) 60th Raising Day event, Shah reported that the introduction of a "laser equipped anti-drone gun-mounted" mechanism has significantly improved drone detection and neutralisation rates along the India-Pakistan border, climbing from 3 per cent to 55 per cent in Punjab. With over 260 drones intercepted this year, Shah emphasised the escalating concern over drones carrying arms and drugs, particularly in Punjab. *—PTI*

Misri to visit Dhaka amid frosty ties

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri is expected to raise India's concerns with Dhaka over attacks on Hindus and other minorities as he embarks on a day-long visit to Bangladesh on Monday. This is the first high-level trip from New Delhi after a massive uprising ended deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's 15-year rule in August. Misri is scheduled to hold wide-ranging talks with his Bangladeshi counterpart Md Jashim Uddin and meet the country's de-facto foreign minister Mohammad Touhid Hossain. It is learnt that the Indian foreign secretary is also likely to call on Bangladesh's interim leader and Nobel Peace laureate Muhammad Yunus during the visit. On its part, Bangladesh is likely to convey its concerns over India continuing to provide shelter to Hasina. *—PTI*

Rajnath to embark on three-day tour to Russia

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is set to embark on a three-day visit to Russia, commencing this Sunday, to oversee the commissioning of the multi-role stealth guided missile frigate INS Tushil into the Indian Navy. The event is scheduled for Monday in Kaliningrad, where the frigate, hailed as one of the most technologically advanced in the world, is expected to enhance the Indian Navy's operational capabilities in the increasingly contested Indian Ocean.

During his visit from 8-10 December, Singh will engage in discussions with Russian Defence Minister Andrey Belousov, co-chairing the 21st meeting of the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military and Military Technical Cooperation in Moscow on 10 December.

The talks will focus on expanding cooperation in the co-production of military hardware and will cover a broad spectrum of defence relations, including military-to-military collaboration. *—PTI*

HISTORIC MOMENT

George Jacob Koovakad, Archbishop of Nisibis of the Chaldeans, Turkey, receives the cardinals' hat and ring from Pope Francis in St. Peter's Basilica at The Vatican. He is the first Indian Catholic priest to be appointed as Cardinal ***PHOTO: PTI***

Belagavi Winter Session begins today

BELAGAVI, 8 DEC

Stage is set for the 10-day Winter Session of the Karnataka State legislature in Belagavi from Monday.

The session is slated to be stormy as the Opposition BJP and its ally JD(S) would try to corner the ruling Congress on a host of issues such as MUDA scam, Waqf Board notices to farmers and institutions, and five maternal deaths in Ballari Medical College and Research Centre.

The session would see five bills, three private bills, and replacement bills for the two ordinances being tabled in the Assembly. According to Assembly Speaker UT Khader, the five bills are Karnataka University (Amendment Bill), Basavana Bagewadi Development Authority Bill, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj University (Amendment) Bill, Karnataka Labour Welfare Fund (Amendment) Bill and Karnataka Tourism Ropeway Bill. Two replacement bills for the two ordinances – BBMP (Amendment) ordinance and Karnataka GST (Amendment) Ordinance – will also be tabled.

"Three private bills by our MLAs have been accepted. The private bill moved by Darshan Puttannaiah pertains to Climate Change in Karnataka. Another bill by MY Patil relates to Ganagapura Dattatreya Development Authority Bill. HK Suresh's private bill is about Belur Halebidu Region Development Authority," Khader said. *—PTI*

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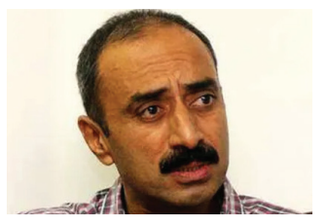
Sanjiv Bhatt acquitted in custodial torture case



Sanjiv Bhatt ***PHOTO: X***

PORBANDAR, 8 DEC

A court in Gujarat's Porbandar has acquitted former IPS officer Sanjiv Bhatt in a 1997 custodial torture case, citing that the prosecution could not "prove the case beyond reasonable doubt".

Additional chief judicial magistrate Mukesh Pandya on Saturday acquitted Bhatt, the then superintendent of police of Porbandar. Bhatt was earlier sentenced to life imprisonment in a 1990 custodial death case in Jamnagar and 20 years in jail in a 1996 case relating to planting drugs to frame a Rajasthan-based lawyer in Palanpur.

The court held that the prosecution could not "prove the case beyond reasonable doubt" that the complainant was forced to confess to the crime.

It also noted that the sanction required to prosecute the accused, who was then a public servant discharging his duty, had not been obtained in the case. *—PTI*

AGITATION IS ON

After flower shower, cops gas farmers

SHAMBHU, 8 DEC

Agitating farmers suspended their foot march to Delhi on Sunday after some of them sustained injuries in teargas shelling by Haryana security personnel who thwarted yet another attempt by the protesters to cross the Punjab-Haryana border.

Farmer leaders said they would decide the next course of action on Monday.

After a group of 101 farmers resumed the foot march this afternoon, they were halted by a multilayered barricade set up by Haryana security personnel who surprised the protesters by offering them tea and biscuits and showering them with flower petals.

Farmers run for cover after police used teargas to disperse them during their protest at the Shambhu border, on Sunday ***PHOTO: PTI***

But the protesters claimed it was all a "drama" as the police soon lobbed teargas shells and used water jets to disperse them when they insisted on crossing the Shambhu border.

As the confrontation escalated, the farmers, many of whom had covered their faces and were wearing protective eyewear, receded a few metres. Some tried to cover the teargas shells with wet jute bags.

On Friday too, the protesters had suspended their march after some of them suffered injuries due to tear gas shells, and farmer leaders had accused Haryana Police of high-handedness. Ambala police had earlier said the farmer outfits, which are agitating for a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price and other demands, can march to Delhi only after getting permission from the national capital administration. They have been pressing the Centre to initiate talks with them to address their issues. *—PTI*

Suvarna Soudha in Belagavi illuminated ahead of the legislature session commencing on Monday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

Farmers protest in City to back nationwide strike

MYSURU, 8 DEC

An indefinite protest organised by farmers' organisations extending support to indefinite a hunger strike undertaken by Samyukta Kisan Morcha entered third day at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Sunday. Samyukta Kisan Morcha, a federation of farmers' associations, has undertaken nationwide indefinite hunger strike from 6 December urging the Union government to fulfil various demands including to table minimum support price bill. On Sunday, Karnataka State Sugarcane Growers' Association, Rajya Raitha Sangha, Mysuru unit, and other organisations held a mock protest. *–Salar News*

Winter Session: Cong to attack Oppn over Covid scam

BENGALURU, 8 DEC

When the winter session of State Legislature begins in Belagavi on Monday, Congress may take on the Opposition by raising the BDA flats bribery case in which BJP strongman and former chief minister BS Yediyurappa and his son and BJP State Chief BY Vijayendra are allegedly involved, a charge dismissed by them. The ruling Congress is expected to raise the issue of 'Covid-19 scam' too.

Justice Michael D' Cunha Commission of Inquiry that investigated alleged irregularities in the purchase of equipment and medicines during the Covid-19 pandemic has recommended prosecution of then chief minister BS Yediyurappa and former minister B Sriramulu, the State government said. Yediyurappa on Sunday said the government is free to carry out any investigation on Covid management. "I think they don't have any other job to do," he said.

The session may also see the Congress and the JD(S) at loggerheads over the HMT land.

Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre has claimed that the HMT land belongs to the forest department, while the Union Minister and JD(S) second-in-command HD Kumaraswamy has rejected it.

Assembly Speaker UT Khader said 8,500 people have been deployed, including 6,000 policemen, for the session. There will be about 2,500 government officers and employees for the smooth functioning of the Assembly.

There will be a picture exhibition on Mahatma Gandhi comprising 100 photographs as a mark of the centenary of Belgaum (now called Belagavi) Congress session, which was presided over by him.

Further, Anubhava Mandapa's picture would be inaugurated by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

All ministers and the MLAs would likely to attend it, Khader said. *—PTI*

Suvarna Vidhana Soudha in Belagavi illuminated ahead of legislature session from Monday **PHOTO: SALAR**

PHOTO: X

Centre approved flyover in Mysuru, says MP Yaduveer

MYSURU, 8 DEC

Union government has approved constructing a flyover at Manipal Hospital junction in Mysuru to ease traffic jams, Mysuru-Kodagu MP Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar said on Sunday. The Centre has allotted Rs 711 crore to construct the flyover as well as three railway overbridges in Mandya, Channapatna and Bidadi on Mysuru-Bengaluru expressway, the MP said. As National Highway Authority of India has made all preparations to float a tender for this work, this construction of flyover is expected to be completed by next month, he said. The construction of the flyover in Kempegowda circle is expected to ease traffic congestion on Mysuru-Bengaluru Expressway. The MP said he has been trying for expanding runaway of Mysuru airport by keeping in touch with the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation. *–Salar News*

Shiv Sena workers banned from entering Belagavi

BELAGAVI, 8 DEC

State government on Sunday night imposed ban on Shiv Sena (UBT) workers from entering Belagavi till 10 December. The Shiv Sena (UBT) workers had warned of participating in 'Mahamelava' (a public convention) that Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES), a pro-Maharashtrian organisation in Karnataka, is planning to organise. The administration has deployed additional police force in all the border checkpoints, airport, railway station and bus stand to prevent the arrival of the workers. Shiv Sena workers from Kolhapur said they will enter Belagavi and take part in the convention. Shiv Sena district chief Devane had told that they would block Pune-Bengaluru national highway at Koganolli, the entrance place of Maharashtra from Karnataka, and not allow the Karnataka registered vehicles to move in Kolhapur as a protest for not giving permission to hold the convention. *–Salar News*

Youths booked for using modified silencers in bikes

BENGALURU, 8 DEC

Devanahalli traffic police have booked four youths for using illegally modified silencers on their motorcycles following repeated complaints of noise pollution from local residents. The silencers were seized, and the offenders face Rs 10,000 in fine or 3 months imprisonment or both under Section 190(2) of Motor Vehicles Act. Residents in Devanahalli and along Bengaluru-Hyderabad highway reported frequent disturbances caused by speeding two-wheelers fitted with modified silencers. The modified vehicles reportedly created a nuisance in residential areas and posed safety risks on the highway. *–Salar News*

4-member panel to probe maternal deaths in State

Panel to report any procedural lapses at KSMSCL

BENGALURU, 8 DEC

The Karnataka government on Sunday formed a four-member panel to probe the maternal deaths in Ballari hospital and elsewhere in the State.

The government said the investigation team comprised the Karnataka Skill Development Corporation Managing Director M Kanagavalli, Assistant Drug Controller Venkatesh, Microbiologist in the Bangalore Medical College Dr Aseema Banu and a senior pharmacology professor nominated by the Rajiv Gandhi University Health Sciences vice chancellor.

The panel is tasked with analysing the sequence of events beginning from the time of issue of the purchase order for the 196 batches of intravenous fluid Ringer Lactate till 30 November, 2024, and reporting any procedural lapses at the Karnataka State Medical Supplies Corporation (KSMSCL).

The verification team should also inquire into the role of all officers at KSMSCL so as to fix responsibilities for the lapses, the order said.

The panel will also verify the existing procedures at KSMSCL and identify gaps in terms of the existing standard and good practices with regard to the procedure of empanelment of labs, testing of the samples, discarding of the batches or the entire supply depending on the Not of Standard Quality (NSQ) reports and report about the compliance of established or absence of standard process.

The order said the panel will also compare the good practices of states like Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan pertaining to drug procurement, quality testing, reporting of adverse effects with the existing practice at KSMSCL.

The Vice Chancellor of the RGUHS or representative will have to give suggestions for an effective Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) in place for Public Health Facilities. *—PTI*

At least five maternal deaths were reported in the past one month in Ballari Medical College and Research Centre **PHOTO: X**

CM offers Rs 5 lakh to victims' kin

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday announced Rs 5 lakh compensation to next of the kin of women who died following child birth complications in Ballari Medical College and Research Centre. At least five maternal deaths have been reported in the past one month in the BMCRC. "I had announced an ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh but the relatives are asking for more. So I announce giving Rs 5 lakh to them," the CM said. *—PTI*

BYPOLL VICTORY EVENT

CM: Only Cong can rule with stability

BALLARI, 8 DEC

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday said at public meeting in Sandur that the Congress alone can give a stable government, unlike the BJP, which made multiple chief ministers rule the State during one term.

The Chief Minister also thanked the voters for electing Congress candidate Annapoorna Tukaram in the assembly bypoll recently. "Sandur has witnessed significant development, unlike before. Tukaram's leadership has brought real change to this constituency," Siddaramaiah noted.

The CM alleged that the BJP never came to power on its own and needed horse-trading, spending crores of rupees, to rule the state.

"The BJP never gave a stable government. From 2008 to 2013, there were three chief ministers. Again from 2019 to 2023, there were two chief ministers," Siddaramaiah said at the Jana Kalyana Samavesha (public welfare meeting) at Sandur in Ballari district.

The chief minister said, "When I became CM in 2013, we had 221 MLAs. Again in 2023, we won 136 seats. We will give a stable government."

He alleged that the BJP never came to power with the people's blessings. It always ruled the state using "Operation Lotus". It spent crores of rupees to buy the MLAs. Operation Lotus is a term coined to refer to BJP's alleged attempts to topple the ruling government using horse-trading.

Siddaramaiah said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi says Na Khaunga, Na Khaane Doonga (Neither shall I indulge in corruption, nor allow others to do it). He should explain where the money came from to buy the MLAs."

The Chief Minister accused BJP and JD(S) of trying hard to bring down the Congress government in Karnataka. He also said BJP State President BY Vijayendra, Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka and Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy are competing with each other to become chief minister.

Siddaramaiah also accused Modi of spreading false claims during the campaign. "I challenged him to substantiate his allegations, promising to retire from politics if proven wrong. He didn't respond because he couldn't," Siddaramaiah said. *–PTI*

BJP will work to dismantle JD(S), says Krishna Byregowda

MYSURU, 8 DEC

Revenue Minister Krishna Byregowda has claimed on Sunday that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will work to dismantle the Janata Dal (Secular) JD(S) in the coming years. During a press interaction in Mysuru, he cautioned JD(S) leaders that BJP would not permit the party to regain strength, highlighting JD(S)'s recent defeat in its traditional stronghold of Channapatna during bypolls.

Byregowda pointed out that while a BJP candidate in Bengaluru Rural garnered nearly 1,10,000 votes in the previous parliamentary elections, the JD(S)-BJP nominee Nikhil Kumaraswamy managed only 85,000 votes this time, losing to Congress candidate CP Yogeshwar by a substantial 25,000-vote margin. He alleged that BJP leaders covertly supported the Congress candidate, asserting that, had there been genuine support for Nikhil, he would have prevailed.

The minister also noted BJP's enhanced performance in the old Mysuru districts, stating that BJP would exploit the JD(S) for political gain before discarding it in the future. He defended JD(S)'s right to hold conventions in Mandya, recognising its historical significance, but insisted that the party faces annihilation in the state in the years ahead.

Byregowda attributed the recent successes of Congress candidates to the efforts of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and KPCC President DK Shivakumar, along with public backing for Congress's schemes. *—Salar News*

Revenue Minister Krishna Byregowda cautioned JD(S) leaders that BJP would not permit the party to regain strength **PHOTO: PTI**

Landlord's brother held for assaulting tenant

BENGALURU, 8 DEC

A 26-year-old woman was allegedly assaulted, dragged and molested by her landlord's brother outside her apartment in Sanjay Nagar police station limits.

The accused, Manjunath Gowda, was arrested after the victim, a native of West Bengal, filed a complaint. As per the complaint, the incident occurred on the night of 3 December at Planet Vista Apartments. The woman alleged that she had stepped out to collect a parcel at the apartment gate when Gowda, reportedly intoxicated, began verbally abusing her. Initially ignoring the remarks, she was taken aback when he escalated the situation by touching her inappropriately and physically assaulting her.

"He slapped me and choked me to the extent that I couldn't breathe, pinning me against the wall," the woman stated in her complaint. Attempts to escape were thwarted when Gowda allegedly bit her finger, causing injuries, and tried to drag her into his house.

- The woman said when she stepped out to collect a parcel at the apartment gate Manjunath Gowda, reportedly intoxicated, began verbally abusing her

However she managed to free herself and fled towards her flat. "He followed me and attacked me more aggressively on the staircase," the complaint said. Other residents intervened, helping her escape.

The ordeal continued the next morning when the woman noticed Gowda peeping through the window of her flat. When confronted, he threatened to break into her home and hurled verbal abuse again. The victim alleged that Gowda had made inappropriate advances and harassed her earlier. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: X

ELDERLY MAN, PEDESTRIAN DIE IN ROAD ACCIDENTS

BENGALURU, 8 DEC

Two separate road accidents in City claimed the lives of a 70-year-old man and a 54-year-old pedestrian over the weekend, with police registering cases in both incidents.

In the first incident, Thomas Anthony, a 70-year-old man from Kerala, succumbed to his injuries after a truck collided with his scooter near Dodda Mara Road in the Electronic City police station limits. The accident occurred around 1:30 pm on Saturday when Anthony was returning to his daughter's house in Rayasandra with his granddaughter on his two-wheeler.

While crossing near a private school, their scooter was struck by a speeding truck, causing both riders to fall onto the road. Anthony suffered critical injuries and was taken to hospital, where he died on Sunday morning after failing to respond to treatment. His granddaughter sustained injuries but is reported to be recovering.

The second fatal accident occurred on Saturday night when a pedestrian, identified as Kishor, 54, a native of Jharkhand, was struck by an unknown vehicle while crossing Hennur Road near a private function hall.

The incident took place around 9pm when Kishor, who had recently started working as a labourer and was residing in Thanisandra, attempted to cross Hegdenagar-Thanisandra Main Road. Severely injured in the collision, he was taken to hospital but succumbed to his injuries around 1am on Sunday.

The driver of the vehicle fled the scene after the accident. Hennur traffic police have registered a case against the unknown driver. *—Salar News*

STIR IN BIDAR

Irrigation project protesters threaten mass suicides

BELAGAVI, 8 DEC

As their indefinite protest approaches the 1,000-day mark, rehabilitators of the Karanja irrigation project in Bidar district have issued a grave warning of mass suicide if their demands are not met by 10 December.

On average, 20 individuals from each of the 28 affected villages participate in the protest daily, highlighting the plight of those who have not received full compensation for the acquisition of their homes and agricultural land.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar previously met with a delegation of protesters during the last legislative session, assuring them that all dues would be cleared before the 2024 budget. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, during the Lok Sabha election campaign, also made similar promises. "Trusting Siddaramaiah, we voted for candidate Sagar Khandre, yet he has not returned to us," criticised Pankaj Rathod, a farmer involved in the protest.

Kallappa Rathod, a leader of the movement, noted that vast tracts of agricultural land belonging to hundreds of families have been acquired for the project. "While a few farmers received complete compensation, most received only partial payments," said the 58-year-old.

Balu Kadoli, who has been protesting for over 200 days, expressed his dismay, stating that although the Karanja project has transformed the formerly dry land of the Kalyan Karnataka region into fertile ground, benefiting many, the original landowners have not been compensated. "Our land was taken for others' benefit, yet we have not received what was promised," he lamented.

Parvati Naik, another participant, shared a personal story, explaining how her family's trust in her husband's claims of owning land was misplaced, as the land was submerged. "The government has cheated the poor by failing to uphold its promises," she added.

Bidar MP Sagar Khandre acknowledged the protesters' grievances but mentioned technical problems regarding documentation have delayed compensation for many.

"Compensation was given only to those with proper documentation; we will address others on humanitarian grounds," he said.

Deputy Commissioner Shilpa Sharma reiterated the need for proper documentation, stating that delays were administrative.

The protesters have now set a 10 December deadline for their demands, threatening drastic actions if their concerns are ignored. *—PTI*

Protesters said they have not received full compensation for the acquisition of their homes and agricultural land for Karanja irrigation project **PHOTO: X**

Iltija calls Hindutva a disease, BJP seeks apology

JAMMU, 8 DEC

'Hindutva' is a disease which is defaming Hinduism and leading to "lynching and persecution" of minorities especially Muslims, with the BJP using it to strengthen its vote bank, PDP Chief Mehbooba Mufti's daughter Iltija on Sunday said. BJP took exception to the remark and demanded an apology for the "derogatory words". "Ram the deity must hang his head in shame & watch helplessly as minor Muslim boys are whacked with chappals only because they refuse to chant his name. Hindutva is a disease thats (sic) afflicted millions of Indians ," Iltija wrote on X, reposting a video of an incident where a Muslim man is being beaten. *—PTI*

Odisha lost ₹75cr excise revenue during Covid: CAG

BHUBANESWAR, 8 DEC

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) unearthed a loss of excise revenue amounting to Rs 75.07 crore due to manipulation of manually maintained sales registers by retail shops of alcoholic beverages in Odisha during the COVID-19 pandemic. In its report, which was placed in the assembly on Saturday, the CAG said that the Odisha Excise Department in May 2020 imposed the Special Covid Fee (SCF), at the rate of 50 per cent of the maximum retail price, on all foreign-made foreign liquor, Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL), beer, wine and ready to drink beverages, sold in the state. SCF was imposed in view of the expected loss of excise revenue, on account of the two months' shutdown, as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

PM to inaugurate Rising Rajasthan summit today

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Rajasthan on Monday during which he will inaugurate the Rising Rajasthan Global Investment Summit 2024. He will also visit Haryana the same day and will launch the LIC's Bima Sakhi Yojana and lay the foundation stone of the main campus of the Maharana Pratap Horticultural University in Panipat. Prime Minister Modi will travel to Jaipur and at around 10:30 am, he will inaugurate the Rising Rajasthan Global Investment Summit 2024 at Jaipur Exhibition and Convention Centre (JECC), a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office said. Thereafter, he will travel to Panipat and at around 2 pm, launch LIC's Bima Sakhi Yojana and lay the foundation stone of the main campus of Maharana Pratap Horticultural University. *—PTI*

Farmers in Gautam Buddha Nagar jail go on hunger strike

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) on Sunday said Greater Noida farmers, currently jailed, have gone on a hunger strike. "Farmers from Greater Noida, currently imprisoned in the District Jail of Gautam Buddha Nagar, have gone on a hunger strike to defend their rights and interests," SKM said in a statement. Farmers in the Philippines have long-pending demands, including a new law ensuring 10 per cent land allotment and addressing the Leaseback settlement issue. They were forcibly detained while peacefully protesting, and their hunger strike poses a significant health risk. The SKM urges the district administration, state government, and central government to prioritise the farmers' demands, as their peaceful protests pose a t risk to their health. *—PTI*

BJP says Sonia Gandhi linked to Soros-funded firm

BJP says it reflects foreign entities' influence on India's affairs

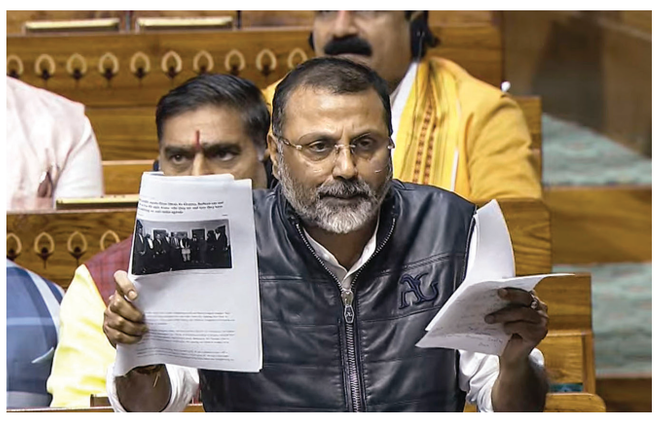
NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

The BJP on Sunday alleged that former Congress president Sonia Gandhi has links to an organisation financed by the George Soros Foundation and which has backed the idea of Kashmir as an independent nation.

This association shows the influence of foreign entities in India's internal affairs, the ruling party said in a series of posts on X.

Party MP Nishikant Dubey said media portal Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) and the Hungarian-American businessman have colluded with the opposition to ruin India's economy and defame the Modi government.

The BJP claimed that Sonia Gandhi, as the co-president of the Forum of the Democratic Leaders in Asia Pacific (FDL-AP) Foundation, is linked to the organisation financed by the George Soros Foundation. "Notably, the FDL-AP Foundation has expressed their views that treat Kashmir as a separate entity," the party said.



BJP MP Nishikant Dubey speaks in the Lok Sabha during the Winter session of Parliament, in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

"This association between Sonia Gandhi and an organisation that has backed the idea of Kashmir as an independent nation expresses the influence of foreign entities on India's internal affairs and the political impact of such connections," it said.

"Rahul Gandhi's press conference on Adani was live telecast by George Soros-funded OCCRP, which Gandhi used as a source to criticise Adani. It also shows nothing but their strong and dangerous relationship and highlights their attempts to derail the Indian economy. Besides, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor has publicly acknowledged George Soros as an 'old friend'," it said.

The BJP said Sonia Gandhi's chairmanship of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation led to a partnership with the George Soros Foundation, "displaying the influence of foreign funding on Indian organisations".

The BJP's allegations come after it claimed on Thursday that the US "deep state" colluded with OCCRP and Rahul Gandhi to damage India's image.

The US on Saturday rejected BJP's allegations that organisations funded by its State Department and elements in the American "deep state" were behind attempts to destabilise India through targeted attacks on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and business tycoon Gautam Adani.

A spokesperson at the US embassy described the allegations as "disappointing" and said the US government has been a champion of media freedom. *—PTI*

IN PARLIAMENT

Congress MP Jairam Ramesh speaks in the Rajya Sabha during the Winter session of Parliament, in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

Cong seeks talks on full gamut of India-China ties

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Attacking the government over its statement in Parliament on India-China ties, the Congress on Sunday asked whether the Modi government has agreed to a "new normal" over the "old normal" prevailing prior to April 2020 and demanded that Parliament must be given an opportunity to debate the full gamut of the relationship between the two countries.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said a discussion in Parliament on India-China relationship should focus on both strategic and economic policy, especially since our dependence on China has increased economically, even as it unilaterally changed the status quo on our borders over four years back.

Ramesh said the Congress has studied the recent suo motu statement made by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar titled "Recent Developments in India's Relations with China".

While "fully appreciating" the sensitive nature of many aspects of India-China border relations, he said the Congress has four pointed questions on the statement issued by the Modi Government. Ramesh noted that the statement claims that "the House is well aware of the circumstances leading up to the violent clashes in Galwan Valley in June 2020", and pointed out that it is an unfortunate reminder that the very first official communication to the nation on this crisis came on 19 June, 2020 when the PM provided a clean chit publicly to China and falsely stated "Na koi hamari seema mein ghus aaya hai, na hi koi ghusa hua hai". *—PTI*

Stop misleading people about EVMs: Shinde to Oppn

MUMBAI, 8 DEC

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Sunday hit out at the Opposition, accusing it of misleading people about electronic voting machines and not accepting their mandate.

Talking to reporters, Shinde said the ruling Mahayuti alliance won Assembly polls because of its work, and the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi must accept the people's mandate and support the government in development works.

He said, "When you win, there is no EVM scam, but the machine becomes bad when you lose. This is not the right approach."

People have shown the opposition its place and proved that they don't vote for those who sit at home, the deputy chief minister said.

Shinde said creating confusion about a democratically elected government was not good for democracy.

Meanwhile, NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar on Sunday expressed his support to the people of Markadwadi village in Maharashtra's Solapur district, who raised doubts about EVMs and announced plans to conduct a "repoll" using ballot papers.

As many as 105 members, including leaders of the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi, took oath as MLAs in the newly constituted Maharashtra legislative assembly on Sunday, the second day of the special session. *—PTI*

Maharashtra DyCM Eknath Shinde addresses the media during second day of the special Assembly session, in Mumbai **PHOTO: PTI**

Items worth Rs 12 lakh stolen during swearing-in ceremony

Gold chains, mobile phones and cash cumulatively valued at Rs 12 lakh were stolen during the swearing-in ceremony of the Mahayuti government at the sprawling Azad Maidan in south Mumbai on 5 December. FIRs are filed against unidentified individuals at a ceremony attended by top industry, cinema, and politics figures, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Meanwhile, 4,000 police personnel were deployed for the swearing-in ceremony but thieves stole gold chains, phones, and wallets from gate two.

Narwekar to be elected as Assembly speaker

MUMBAI, 8 DEC

BJP's Rahul Narwekar is poised to be elected unopposed as the speaker of the Maharashtra legislative assembly, with the opposition alliance Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) deciding not to put up a contest.

Narwekar, who was the speaker in the 14th assembly for two and a half years and gave the key verdicts tied to the Shiv Sena and NCP, was reelected from the Colaba assembly seat in Mumbai.

Accompanied by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and his deputies Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar, Narwekar filed his nomination before the legislature secretary Jitendra Bhole. MVA leaders met Fadnavis and urged him to follow the protocol of giving the deputy speaker's post to the opposition. They also sought the post of the leader of the opposition. The Speaker's election will be formally announced in the House on Monday. This will be followed by a floor test to prove the new government's strength. Governor CP Radhakrishnan will then address the joint session of both Houses of the state legislature. During his tenure as Assembly speaker, Narwekar had ruled that the party led by Eknath was the legitimate and "real Shiv Sena" after a split in the Bal Thackeray-founded party. *—PTI*

Will question RaGa on BJP's allegations against US: Dubey

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Notwithstanding the US' dismissal of BJP's allegations that it is backing attempts to destabilise India, party MP Nishikant Dubey on Sunday said he will ask Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi 10 questions in the Lok Sabha on the issue. In a post on X, Dubey alleged that media portal Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) and Hungarian-American businessman George Soros have colluded with the opposition to ruin India's economy and defame the Modi government. The US on Saturday rejected BJP's allegations that organisations funded by its State Department and elements in the American "deep state" were behind attempts to destabilise India through targeted attacks on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and business tycoon Gautam Adani. A spokesperson at the US embassy described the allegations as "disappointing". *—PTI*

Sharad Pawar backs Mamata as INDIA bloc leader

MUMBAI/KOLKATA, 8 DEC

Nationalist Congress Party (SP) chief Sharad Pawar has supported West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's statement expressing her willingness to take charge of the INDIA bloc. Talking to reporters in Kolhapur on Saturday, Pawar said the Trinamool Congress chief is a capable leader and has the right to show her intent to head the opposition alliance. Earlier this week, Banerjee said she could manage the dual responsibility of running the opposition front while continuing her role as the chief minister of West Bengal.

Her statement comes at a time when broader tensions have emerged within the INDIA bloc due to dissatisfaction from various regional parties and the recent electoral setbacks for the Congress in Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir and Maharashtra.

Asked about Banerjee's remark, Pawar said, "She is a capable leader in the country and has the right to say it. The MPs she has sent to the Parliament are hardworking and aware." Meanwhile, senior RJD leader and former Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav on Sunday said he has no objection to any senior leader of the INDIA bloc, including TMC chief Mamata Banerjee, leading the coalition, but stressed that the decision must be reached through consensus. Yadav, who is the leader of the opposition in Bihar assembly, told reporters at the city airport, "INDIA bloc hasn't thought on this matter and there has to be a discussion involving all stakeholders."- *—PTI*

TMC Supremo Mamata Banerjee had said she could manage the dual responsibility of running the opposition front while continuing her role as the chief minister of West Bengal **PHOTO: X**

BANGLADESH ROW

Protesters torch Dhakai sarees in WB

KOLKATA, 8 DEC

Protests were held in several parts of West Bengal on Sunday over the alleged atrocities on Hindu minorities in Bangladesh.

Hundreds of people joined the rallies organised by Hindutva groups in Kolkata, Kanthi, Kakdwip, Sandeshkhali and Purulia, demanding immediate release of Hindu leader Chinmoy Krishna Das.

At the demonstration in Salt Lake International Bus Terminus in Kolkata, protesters torched Dhakai Jamdani sarees from Bangladesh. They called for a boycott of Bangladeshi goods, warning that Indians wouldn't stay silent if the disrespect toward the tricolour and attacks on Hindus continued.

LoP in the West Bengal Assembly Suvendu Adhikari protests against the alleged atrocities on Hindus in Bangladesh, in Kolkata **PHOTO: PTI**

"We condemn the continuous targeting of Hindus in Bangladesh and the hate-driven narratives against India. With the burning of the Jamdani sarees, we urge people to boycott Bangladeshi products," said a protestor.

"What kind of Bangladesh is this? The people who fought for liberation in 1971 now seem to be erasing their own history," said another protestor. Leading the protest rally in Kanthi, Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari said sanatanis were united against rising fundamentalist forces in Bangladesh.

"The martyrdom of 30,000 Indian soldiers in the 1971 Bangladesh liberation war has been forgotten by the Islamists. Today's rally is a wake-up call to the elements across the border to stop rabble-rousing rhetoric," he said. *—PTI*

Bangladesh adviser hopeful to resolve stalemate

DHAKA, 8 DEC

Bangladesh and India will be able to overcome the stalemate in the relationship witnessed in recent months, Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain said here on Sunday.

His comments came ahead of Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's visit to Bangladesh on Monday during which he is likely to raise with Dhaka India's concerns over attacks on Hindus after a massive uprising ended deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's 15-year rule in August.

This will be the first visit to be made by a senior Indian government official to Bangladesh since the interim government came to power on 8 August "We expect that we will be able to overcome this impasse. Establishing mutual communication and meeting each other is very important to overcome any such stalemate," Hossain told a seminar titled 'SAARC - People of South Asia Crave' at the National Press Club. "I hope they (foreign secretaries) will have a fruitful discussion," he said.

He noted that it is important to acknowledge that there is a problem if they want to solve any problem. Hossain, a career diplomat, said it is also important to note that the relations between Bangladesh and India witnessed changes after 5 August, and both sides need to try and take forward the relations and accept this changed reality. *—PTI*

2 constables killed after speeding car hits their bike

HYDERABAD, 8 DEC

Two police constables died after a speeding four-wheeler hit their bike in Siddipet district of Telangana on Sunday, police said. The accident occurred in Gajwel town when the two constables were proceeding to Hyderabad to participate in a marathon. Both the constables in their early 40s, died on the spot. Siddipet Commissioner of Police B Anuradha visited the hospital and paid tributes. She also met the family members of the deceased constables. A case was registered and further investigation is on. *—PTI*

Leopard strays into residential colony in Jaipur, attacks 3

JAIPUR, 8 DEC

Panic spread in the Vidhyadhar Nagar area here after a leopard strayed into a residential colony and attacked three people, officials said on Sunday. The incident occurred on 7 December, Saturday, they said, adding that the wildcat was tranquillised and rescued following hours-long operation by a forest department team. Deputy Conservator of Forest Jagdish Gupta said that information was received about the movement of a leopard in Vidyadhar Nagar. It was first spotted in a government guest house behind the plants in the Central Public Works Department Garden, he said. The leopard then ventured onto the road and attacked three people. Upon receiving information, teams from the forest department, police and civil defence reached the spot. It was then tranquillised and rescued. *—PTI*

Gorakhpur to be 1st integrated waste management city

GORAKHPUR, 8 DEC

Gorakhpur is set to establish the country's first Integrated Waste Management City-cum-Learning Centre by September 2025, aimed at making the city garbage-free and promoting sustainable waste management through circular economy model. Spread across 40 acres in Suthni village, Sahjanwa, the project will process various types of waste while generating charcoal and Bio-CNG, Gorakhpur Municipal Commissioner Gaurav Sogarwal said. The initiative is expected to create jobs, boost revenue and serve as a learning hub for technical expertise, he said. The model will be showcased by the Ministry of Environment at the National Chief Secretaries' Conference in Delhi from 13 to 15 December. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

'Pushpa 2' earns Rs 621 crore in three days

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Telugu star Allu Arjun's 'Pushpa 2: The Rule' crossed Rs 600 crore mark at the global box office, continuing its historic and record-breaking run in cinemas. Production banner Mythri Movie Makers, which has bankrolled the project, shared the movie's latest box office figures on social media, and said 'Pushpa 2' has earned Rs 621 crore gross in just three days. According to the company, the Sukumar-directed movie, which is a sequel to 2021's Telugu blockbuster "Pushpa: The Rise", touched Rs 500 crore mark on Saturday, making it the fastest Indian film to hit the milestone. The second part, which released across the globe on Thursday with dubbed versions in Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, Bengali, and Malayalam, debuted with a historic box office score of Rs 294 crore gross on day one.*—PTI*

'Pak's ISI uses drug addicts as terror couriers in Indian jails'

Many of them in jails across Jammu, Punjab and Rajasthan

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is allegedly utilising drug addicts and individuals posing as mentally disturbed to infiltrate India, with the aim of delivering critical messages to jailed terrorists, officials have reported.

Since July 2024, more than 10 such infiltrations have been noted, with Pakistani nationals reportedly entering India from both Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Many of these individuals have been incarcerated in jails across Jammu, Punjab, and Rajasthan.

Security officials suspect these infiltrators are acting as couriers for the ISI, tasked with relaying important communications to imprisoned terrorists. Interrogations of these suspects reveal they have been trained to withstand aggressive questioning techniques, raising suspicions about their true motives.

The use of electronic devices, such as mobile phones, poses a risk of exposure for these ISI operatives. Thus, the agency has adopted this new tactic to minimise digital footprints. Reports suggest that women and minors may also be involved as couriers. One notable case involved a minor from Pakistan's Attock, who was intercepted in Punjab carrying a damp paper with illegible Arabic writing.

Pakistani nationals are entering India from both Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir *PHOTO: PTI*

> Security officials suspect these infiltrators are acting as couriers for the ISI, tasked with relaying important communications to imprisoned terrorists

Connections between the ISI's infiltration tactics and drug trafficking operations have also emerged. In a recent incident in Rajasthan, a Pakistani national claimed under interrogation to have been hired by drug lords to facilitate narcotics smuggling into India while gathering intelligence on Border Security Force troop deployments.

Officials have indicated that these suspects are typically charged under the Foreigners Act and the Passports Act. This recent resurgence in ISI operations mirrors tactics from the late 1990s, when "sawari operators" were used for covert courier roles in drug smuggling and funding terrorism. *—PTI*

CHANGANASSERY ARCHDIOCESE

Believers celebrate Cardinal George Jacob's ordination

KOTTAYAM, 8 DEC

The faithful of Mammoodu Lourdes Matha Church in Changanassery celebrated with immense joy following the elevation of 51-year-old priest George Jacob Koovakad to the rank of Cardinal by Pope Francis. This milestone has sparked pride within the Archdiocese of Changanassery and among Catholics across India, increasing the total number of Indian cardinals to six.

In anticipation of his return, scheduled for 15 December, parish members have organised a grand welcome for Cardinal Koovakad on 23 December. Fr. John V Thadathil, vicar of Mammoodu Lourdes Matha Church, confirmed that preparations for the reception are well underway.

On Saturday night, a large crowd gathered at Koovakad's home parish to watch the ordination ceremony streamed live, filling the church with hymns of gratitude and emotion. Among the attendees were local politician Job Michael and various parishioners, all reflecting on this significant achievement.

George Jacob Koovakad *PHOTO: X*

Litty Mathew, the sister of Cardinal Koovakad, expressed her delight, describing the appointment as "God's great will" and a remarkable gift for the festive season. Her husband, Mathew Scaria, echoed her sentiments, stating that this Christmas will be particularly special for their family.

A delegation from the Archdiocese of Changanassery, led by Archbishop Mar Thomas Tharayil, attended the ordination in the Vatican, where many local believers had also travelled to witness the historic event. *—PTI*

NGT seeks response on Hyderabad plant blast

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has requested a response from the Hyderabad regional office of the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, among others, regarding a reactor blast at a pharmaceutical company in Hyderabad last month, which resulted in one fatality and three injuries.

The tribunal acted on its own accord following a PTI article published on 21 November, titled "One dead, three injured in reactor blast at pharma company in Hyderabad." The incident reportedly occurred while workers were performing repairs on the reactor.

In an order dated 28 November, NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava stated that the article highlighted a flash fire triggered by the explosion, leading to the death of one worker and injuries to the others. The tribunal noted a lack of information regarding compensation for the victims, referencing its prior rulings that mandated payments in cases of similar boiler explosions.

PHOTO: PTI

The matter is scheduled for a hearing on 5 February for further proceedings. *—PTI*

AFTER ARGUMENT

Policeman shoots dead colleague before ending his life in J&K

JAMMU, 8 DEC

A policeman allegedly shot dead his colleague with an AK-47 assault rifle before turning the weapon on himself to commit suicide in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district early Sunday, officials said.

The two policemen along with another colleague were travelling from north Kashmir's Sopore to the Subsidary Training Centre (STC) Talwara in Reasi district of Jammu region when the incident took place.

The bullet-riddled bodies of the two cops were seen lying inside a police van near the Kali Mata temple in Rehembal area of Udhampur around 6.30am.

Officials said the head constable opened fire at the driver over some argument before committing suicide.

The bullet-riddled bodies of the two cops were seen lying inside a police van near the Kali Mata temple in Rehembal area of Udhampur *PHOTO: PTI*

A selection grade constable, who was also travelling in the vehicle, escaped unhurt and is being questioned, they said.

Senior Superintendent of Police, Udhampur, Amod Ashok Nagpure said the accused used his AK 47 assault rifle in the firing.

"They were posted in Sopore and belonged to Kashmir. The accused shot dead his colleague before killing himself," the officer said, quoting the preliminary information. *—PTI*

Centre seeks states' plans for menstrual hygiene policy

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

The Indian government has called on states to submit action plans to effectively implement the menstrual hygiene policy aimed at improving access to affordable hygiene products and promoting gender-sensitive sanitation facilities in public and government-aided schools.

The Union Health Ministry's directive follows a Supreme Court ruling on 12 November , which highlighted the necessity for tailored comprehensive action plans for each state and Union Territory (UT).

This policy, approved by the ministry on 2 November, seeks to enhance awareness of menstrual hygiene among schoolgirls, breaking down barriers that hinder their mobility and daily participation. *—PTI*

Tantrik dies in custody, cops say he killed 12

AHMEDABAD, 8 DEC

A 42-year-old tantrik arrested for allegedly conspiring to murder a businessman died in police custody in Gujarat's Ahmedabad on Sunday after admitting to killing 12 people by giving them drinks laced with a chemical, police said.

The Sarkhej police arrested Navalsinh Chavda around 1am on 3 December when he was on his way to commit the crime after his partner for a taxi business with whom he shared the plan tipped off the police, an official said.

The police secured Chavda's remand till 3pm on 10 December for further probe.

"Around 10am on Sunday, Chavda fell ill and was rushed to the civil hospital in an ambulance, but the doctors declared him dead on arrival, the official said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Shivam Verma said the accused confessed to having committed 12 murders by making his victims consume sodium nitrite dissolved in water during occult rituals.

Chavda admitted to having murdered a man in Ahmedabad, six in Surendranagar, including three members of his family, three in Rajkot, and one each in Wankaner and Anjar, Verma said.

PHOTO: PTI

He said the accused confessed to having murdered a man whose body was found in the Aslali area of Ahmedabad in August 2021 in what appeared to be a road accident. The probe has also revealed that the accused had similarly killed his grandmother around 14 years ago and his mother and uncle a year ago, Verma said. Due to poisoning, several of his victims died of heart attacks, while the nature of some other deaths was a matter of investigation, the official said. *—PTI*

CRIME FILE

VLOGGER ACCUSED OF SEXUALLY HARASSING RUSSIAN TOURIST IN GOA

PANAJI, 8 DEC

The Goa police are investigating allegations of sexual harassment against a vlogger accused of shooting videos of Russian women during his visit to the coastal state, an official said on Sunday. The matter was brought to the police's notice when an X user pointed out videos posted by a vlogger of a Russian woman sunbathing on a beach in Goa. The vlogger, who identifies as Bangladeshi, had similarly put up a video of another woman on a beach. The timeline on the vlogger's account suggests that the videos were posted around eight to nine months ago. Responding to the post on X, the Goa police wrote, "Cyber police station has been directed to enquire into the matter." A senior official from the cybercrime cell said the vlogger is being investigated for his acts during his visit to the state. "We will take appropriate action once the probe is complete," he said. *—PTI*

MAN LOSES RS 21.9 LAKH IN BITCOIN FRAUD IN MAHARASHTRA

THANE, 8 DEC

A 33-year-old man from Maharashtra's Thane district was allegedly cheated of Rs 21.9 lakh by cyber fraudsters who lured him to trade in Bitcoin, police said on Sunday. The complainant, a resident of Dombivli, received a call from an overseas phone number, and the caller lured him to trade in Bitcoin, assuring him of lucrative returns, an official said. He said the man transferred Rs 21.9 lakh from 8 November to 3 December. However, when he sought returns on his investment, the fraudsters did not respond to his calls or messages. Police have registered a case. *—PTI*

200 BULLETS STOLEN FROM MP POLICE'S ARMOURIES

MORENA 8 DEC

As many as 200 cartridges of 9mm pistols and self-loading rifles were allegedly stolen from the armouries of the Madhya Pradesh police's special armed forces (SAF) in Morena district, an official said on Sunday. The commandants of the SAF's 2nd and 5th battalion suspended their company commanders after the theft came to light on Saturday, Morena additional superintendent of police Gopal Dhakad told PTI. The official said a first information report was registered with the Kotwali police after the guards of the armouries informed the reserve inspector (RI) of the police lines about the theft. He denied that pistols were stolen from the two armouries of the SAF. *—PTI*

GROUNDBREAKING

Ex-ISRO scientist hails Proba-3 mission

CHENNAI, 8 DEC

PV Venkitakrishnan, a former ISRO scientist hailed the recent launch of the European Space Agency's (ESA) Proba-3 satellites aboard ISRO's PSLV-C59 rocket as a 'groundbreaking mission'. He stated that this mission would greatly advance our understanding of the Sun's corona and solar wind.

Venkitakrishnan, the former director of ISRO's Capacity Building Programme Office, highlighted the innovative design and advanced technologies employed in this collaborative effort between ESA and ISRO. Proba-3 aims to study the corona, which is hotter than the Sun's surface, and to investigate the solar wind – a stream of charged particles emanating from the Sun.

The 550-kg Proba-3 mission was launched from the Sriharikota spaceport in Andhra Pradesh on 5 December *PHOTO: PTI*

"The data collected from the Proba-3 satellites will help scientists improve their predictions of space weather events that can affect the Earth's magnetic field and satellite operations," he noted. The mission consists of two satellites, the Coronagraph and the Occulter, which will manoeuvre into a precise formation 150m apart in the coming days.

The Coronagraph spacecraft is equipped to capture high-resolution images of the Sun's corona, mimicking a total solar eclipse, which is typically a brief occurrence. Proba-3 will provide six continuous hours of observation during each orbit, equivalent to approximately 50 natural solar eclipses annually.

The mission features an advanced propulsion system enabling precise control and manoeuvring of the spacecraft, developed by ESA. *—PTI*

Sabarimala road accidents drop with safe zone project

PATHANAMTHITTA, 8 DEC

As the Mandala-Makaravilakku pilgrimage season at the Sabarimala Lord Ayyappa temple reaches its midpoint, devotees are benefitting from the Safe Zone Project initiated by Kerala's Motor Vehicles Department (MVD). This initiative has led to a notable reduction in road accidents along the pilgrimage route.

In the last 21 days, only 38 accidents occurred within a 400-km radius encompassing Elavunkal, Erumely, and Kuttikkanam, resulting in 20 minor injuries and no fatalities.

This is a marked improvement compared to the same period last year, which recorded 60 accidents, including two deaths. Notably, Erumely and Kuttikkanam reported 22 and 26 incidents respectively.

Idukki Enforcement RTO KK Rajeev attributed the decline in accidents to increased patrolling, better road conditions, and favourable weather. Pilgrims can reach emergency helplines at Elavunkal (09400044991), Erumely (09496367974), and Kuttikkanam (09446037100). *—PTI*

SPREADING JOY

Children stand under a play parachute during an event organised by the local NGO Ukrainian Frontiers during celebration St. Nicholas Day in Izium, Ukraine. Every winter, the volunteers travel to heavily damaged cities to deliver gifts and ensure that, despite the war, Ukrainian children can celebrate the holiday season just like their peers around the world ***PHOTO: X***

Manipur students hit hard by violence and curfew

Prolonged violence in Manipur with frequent internet shutdowns, curfews and general strikes is affecting the academic and career pursuits of students pursuing higher education in the northeastern state, many educationists said.

With frequent internet shutdowns, students are facing problems in having access to online resources and many recruiters are hesitant to visit campuses in Manipur for placement drive due to curfews and general strikes, they said.

Head of the Department of Computer Science and Engineering and also in charge of placement of National Institute of Technology (NIT) Manipur, K H Johnson Singh told PTI "We have witnessed a decline in recruitment drives after violence broke out in the state. At least 40 companies (online mode) came and 70 students have been selected this year. This is much less than what we were used to before the outbreak of violence. We had expected selection of some 100 students and some 50 companies."

He said, "Recruiters who prefer offline mode of interviews are much reluctant to visit for campus interviews. Despite our consistent assurance that the NIT campus is safe and just 20 minutes from the airport, the media images of tyres burning in the streets, mob violence and gunfights at peripheral areas seemed to have affected their psychology."

Eighty per cent of our students stay in hostels within the campus and have access to broadband 24 hours a day, he added.

Assistant Professor of Mass Communication at Manipur University, Natasha Elangbam told PTI "Our students in every department have limited access to online resources as the majority of them rely on mobile internet data. Curfews and general strikes have severely affected ongoing classes. Timely completion of assignments given to students are also affected as many students do not have broadbands at their homes."

Internet shutdown in Manipur has severely affected career counselling agencies with many senior counsellors unable to provide desired information flow to students seeking employment ***PHOTO: PTI***

- More than 250 people have been killed, and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May last year. The violence besides inflicting heavy casualties, rendered thousands of people homeless

Internet shutdown also has severely affected career counselling agencies with many senior counsellors unable to provide desired information flow to students seeking employment. Counsellors also said that submission of resumes to national companies has been affected.

Sapam Joychandra, Director of SS Career Counselling told PTI, "We are unable to conduct psychometric assessment of students that would help chart out a career route for the concerned student. Counselling through zoom, online mock tests and other tools have been affected. Students are unable to submit their resumes on time to outside companies. Those having broadband is very limited and the majority of the students rely on mobile data internet services for every form of update related to their education and career. For my organisation alone, there is a drastic change of 90 per cent in student guiding activities before and after the violence."

More than 250 people have been killed, and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kuki-Zo groups since May last year.

The violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kuki-Zo groups, besides inflicting heavy casualties, rendered thousands of people homeless since May last year.

It started after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley. Meanwhile, tribals Nagas and Kukis constitute little 40 per cent over and reside mostly in the hills districts. *—PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR

Europe's economy struggles amid political chaos

Even before the French and German governments collapsed, Europe's economy had enough difficulties. Tepid growth and lagging competitiveness versus the US and China. An auto industry that's struggling. Where to find billions for defense against Russia? And now US president-elect Donald Trump threatening tariffs.

Solutions will be harder to find while the two countries that make up almost half of the eurozone economy remain stuck in political paralysis well into 2025.

Where once there was the so-called French-German axis to push Europe ahead, now there's a vacuum. French Prime Minister Michel Barnier resigned on Thursday after losing a vote of confidence, and while President Emmanuel Macron will appoint a successor, the new head of government will lack a majority. Elections are not constitutionally permitted until at least June.

Germany's coalition led by Social Democratic Chancellor Olaf Scholz with the Greens and pro-business Free Democrats fractured in November, triggering an early election on 23 February. Talks to form a new government could last into April.

At least Germany's likely new chancellor, conservative opposition leader Friedrich Merz, appears open to loosening constitutional restrictions on borrowing to enable pro-growth spending and investment, said Mujtaba Rahman, managing director Europe at Eurasia Group.

France, however, could be facing "complete paralysis on the economic question," Rahman said. "It's highly unlikely they're going to get a political equilibrium that has a mandate to implement a credible fiscal course correction."

"And that's obviously a problem for Europe because it means the great potential of the European economy is not what it otherwise should be, because you don't have France and Germany firing on all cylinders," he said.

Then there's Europe's lagging business environment, dissected by former European Central Bank head Mario Draghi in a report that contains recommendations such as common borrowing to support public investment; EU-wide industrial policy; and integrating financial markets to help startups raise capital. Yet "nothing can move in Europe without Franco-German alignment," Rahman said. Meanwhile, Europe's auto industry has sought a review of tough EU emissions standards in 2025 instead of 2026, saying slackening demand for electric cars means they won't be able to avoid heavy fines and that the money would be better used to develop new electric vehicles.

Anne-Laure Delatte, a French economist and head of research at the National Center for Scientific Research, said financial markets remain cautious but are not overly alarmed by France's political instability. But economic weakness in France and Germany could have broader implications for the European Union.

France is expected to see growth of 1.1 per cent this year and 0.8 per cent next year, while Germany's economy is expected to shrink 0.1 per cent this year, the second consecutive year of contraction, and rebound modestly with 0.7 per cent next year. Germany faces headwinds from a shortage of skilled labor, excessive bureaucracy and higher energy prices, and efforts to address those issues have been stalled by squabbling in Scholz's coalition.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, head of the EU's executive arm, is equipped with serious powers, especially on trade, a key EU authority delegated to Brussels by member countries. But there's only so much von der Leyen can do without political backing from the two biggest member countries, whose national budgets are bigger than the EU's.

The most urgent matter may be how to respond to Trump, who takes office 20 January. European officials are trying to defuse a potential trade conflict involving new US tariffs or import taxes on European goods that would seriously ding the continent's export-focused economy.

Europe could decide not to retaliate to any US tariffs, thus avoiding a mutually destructive tit-for-tat cycle. The bloc could also commit to buying US liquefied natural gas to mollify Trump, or spend billions more on defense for Ukraine to answer his complaint that European countries don't meet NATO commitments on defense spending. EU commission estimates that as much as USD 528 billion will be needed over the next decade to help meet the bloc's security needs. Defence Commissioner Andrius Kubilius has indicated common defense bonds could raise that enormous sum. But moving ahead without Germany, the bloc's biggest member, is hard to imagine. *—PTI*

European officials are trying to defuse a trade conflict involving new US tariffs or import taxes on European goods that would seriously affect the continent's export-focused economy ***PHOTO: ANADOLU***

Kolkata traders are hit by absence of Bangladeshi tourists

The ongoing crisis in Bangladesh and subsequent non-arrival of travellers from there has led to a blow to the traders of a particular area in central Kolkata, which is popular among tourists from the neighbouring country for shopping and staying.

A section of those perplexed traders are staring at a void, while others are either looking at new avenues or decided to woo back the Indian customers they have lost in the past.

An estimated 15,000 families are now affected by the situation.

According to a trader, in the past, local customers and tourists from other states in India used to visit these areas for various purposes. They were more or less ignored by the traders and their population gradually dwindled over the years.

"Now there is a big question mark. They don't know what to do... they don't know in which direction their business will go since they are dependent only on the Bangladeshis," the National Committee Member of Travel Agents Federation of India (East India), Anil Punjabi, said.

He said the governments of both countries should hold a dialogue to resolve the situation as fast as possible.

- If the ongoing situation in Bangladesh prevails for some more time, many people will lose their jobs and some people may contemplate dying by suicide

With 80 to 85 per cent of Bangladeshis visiting Free School Street, Marquis Street, Sudder Street, Lindsay Street, Collin Lane and the adjoining areas for forex, airline tickets, hotels, restaurants and shopping, businessmen in this region became dependent on tourists from the neighbouring country, Free School Street Traders Association secretary, Hyder Ali Khan, said.

"All of us are in trouble as a result of the crisis," Khan said, condemning the ongoing atrocities against Hindus and other minorities in Bangladesh.

"I am 55 years old and grew up in this area. I have seen local people - Hindus and Muslims – shopping before Durga Puja and Eid in the area in my childhood," Khan said.

Gradually everything changed due to the constant wooing only of Bangladeshi customers and therefore Indian tourists and even locals, started avoiding this area as it is full of Bangladeshi tourists, he narrated.

An estimated 15,000 families in Kolkata are now affected by the ongoing Bangladesh situation ***PHOTO: PTI***

Traders here used to be busy attending to foreigners and this attitude of theirs has now become the reason behind their nemesis.

If the ongoing situation in Bangladesh prevails for some more time, many people will lose their jobs and some people may contemplate dying by suicide as they are about to lose everything they have accumulated so far, he said.

"Both governments need to resolve the issue as soon as possible," Khan said.

He also said that a meeting will be held on Monday on the issue.

The President of the Free School Street Traders Association, Monotosh Kumar Saha, said that he has been running business in the area for the last 25 years. Now, he runs a transport service, a hotel business and a pub.

"We operate bus services from Petrapole border and bring Bangladeshi passengers here, which is very popular with them," Saha said.

On 6 December, a total of only 130 people came here whereas the figure used to vary between 5,000 and 7,000 per day, he said.

Businesses of this region cater to all the needs of Bangladeshi tourists whenever they come to Kolkata. Even the tourists visiting other places in India do not go back without coming here, Saha claimed.

"The businessmen and traders have learnt their lessons and are thinking of not depending fully on Bangladeshi tourists in future. Now the task ahead is to woo tourists from other states as well as local people so that they come here like the olden days," Saha said.

"I have told my staff that I won't be able to run the bar and hotel after December 31. If the situation does not improve in Bangladesh, I will have to terminate them," he said.

The attendance in the bar and hotel occupancy has come down to 50 per cent from being always full, he said.

"I have 28 rooms in my hotel and only four rooms were rented on Friday. The rooms used to be full before the Bangladesh trouble," Saha said.

Some of the people here have businesses across the border and supplied goods to traders in Bangladesh on credit. They are worried as large sums of money are yet to be recovered from their partners there, said Punjabi.

Staring at uncertainties, the business community now looks forward to the meeting of the stakeholders on Monday. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

3 Pak security personnel killed in terror attacks

KARACHI, 8 DEC

At least three security personnel have been killed in two separate terror attacks in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province, police said on Sunday. Two Frontier Corps soldiers were killed and three others sustained injuries after terrorists attacked a checkpost near a coal mine in Duki district on Saturday, a senior police official, said. The attackers used rockets, grenades, and heavy firearms during the hours-long assault. The exact number of those killed or injured on their side remains unconfirmed. In another incident, militants in Gwadar's Jiwani town targeted a Pakistan Coast Guards patrol with an improvised explosive device (IED) near a lighthouse in the Daran area. The attack led to the death of one security personnel, police said. *—PTI*

Imran Khan's party to launch more protests

ISLAMABAD, 8 DEC

Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province Ali Amin Gandapur, the firebrand leader of Imran Khan's party, has warned of launching more protests against the federal government to secure the release of the jailed former premier. Khan's party protested on 24 November after he demanded the restoration of his electoral mandate, the release of detained members, and the reversal of the 26th Amendment, which he claimed strengthened a "dictatorial regime." PTI leadership, including Gandapur and Khan's wife, disappeared during the protest in Islamabad, where law enforcement launched an operation to clear the Red Zone. Pakistani Chief Minister Gandapur has accused the government of killing his party's supporters after imposing Section 245. *—PTI*

Burkina Faso junta names new PM after govt dismissal

DEUTSCHE WELLE, 8 DEC

A day after dissolving government, Burkina Faso's military junta has announced a new premier. Rimtalba Jean Emmanuel Ouedraogo served as communication minister and spokesman of the previous government. Burkina Faso's military junta has appointed former communications minister Rimtalba Jean Emmanuel Ouedraogo as prime minister, following the dismissal of outgoing premier Apollinaire Joachim Kyelem de Tambela by ruling military leader Captain Ibrahim Traore. T Ouedraogo, a journalist and former editor-in-chief of the Sahel state television network, was appointed as communications minister and government spokesperson by President Traore after the September 2022 coup. —PTI

Stolen 'The Wizard of Oz' ruby slippers auctioned for $28M

MINNEAPOLIS, 8 DEC

A pair of iconic ruby slippers that were worn by Judy Garland in "The Wizard of Oz" and stolen from a museum nearly two decades ago sold for a winning bid of USD 28 million at an auction. Heritage Auctions had estimated that they would fetch USD 3 million or more, but on Saturday, the fast-paced bidding far outpaced that amount within seconds and tripled it within minutes. A few bidders making offers by phone volleyed back and forth for 15 minutes as the price climbed to the final, eye-popping sum. The unknown buyer will ultimately pay USD 32.5 million. Online bidding had stood at USD 1.55 million before live bidding began on late Saturday. *—PTI*

EX-SYRIAN PM TO LEAD STATE BODIES

Meanwhile, Israel PM orders military to 'seize' Syria buffer zone

DAMASCUS, 8 DEC

The leader of the main armed opposition group in Syria says former Prime Minister Mohammed Ghazi al-Jalali will supervise state institutions until they are handed over, as fighters declared an end to Bashar al-Assad's 24-year rule. This announcement coincides with claims from opposition forces that they have effectively "liberated" the capital, Damascus, in a rapid offensive, while reports suggest that al-Assad has fled the city, with his current location unknown.

Al-Jalali's appointment by al-Assad in September was part of the government restructuring effort. However, following the announcement from the opposition, Abu Mohammed al-Julani, head of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), stated that al-Jalali will oversee state institutions until they are transitioned to a new leadership. In a video statement, al-Jalali expressed his intention to ensure the continuity of public services and was open to negotiations with the opposition. "I am not leaving and I don't intend to leave. I expect in a peaceful manner to guarantee the safety and security for all citizens," he said, emphasising his commitment to a dialogue with the opposition. In discussions with Al Arabiya, al-Jalali confirmed that he had maintained contact with HTS leadership to navigate the complexities of the transitional period, advocating for the necessity of free elections in Syria.

Reports indicate that communications with al-Assad and his defence minister were lost on Saturday night, leaving al-Jalali unaware of their whereabouts. Meanwhile, former supporters of al-Assad's regime have begun to distance themselves publicly, with Syria's al-Watan newspaper acknowledging a "new page for Syria," while attempting to deflect criticism of their past allegiance. In a noteworthy statement, the Alawite sect, supportive of al-Assad, urged Syrian youth to pursue peace rather than division. "We were and still are advocates of peace and advocates of unity," they asserted.

The Israeli military said Sunday it also sent troops to "other places necessary for its defence," and that the force deployment was meant to provide security for residents of the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights.

It added it was "not interfering with the internal events in Syria." *—Agencies*

People gather to celebrate the fall of the Syrian government, in Manbij, Syria, on Sunday PHOTO: PTI

World reacts as many hail 'good news'

DAMASCUS, 8 DEC

Joyous celebrations erupted in Damascus and other parts of the country, including along the border with neighbouring Lebanon, with many displaced Syrians deciding to return home.

"What is important is that we are able to find a situation where there is a political way out of this," Geir Pedersen, UN envoy to Syria, said. Meanwhile, China said, Beijing "is closely following the development of the situation in Syria and hopes that Syria returns to stability as soon as possible", the foreign ministry said in a statement. "The Chinese government has actively assisted Chinese citizens who are willing to leave Syria in a safe and orderly way, and has maintained contact with ... Chinese citizens who remain in Syria," the ministry said.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz described the fall of al-Assad as "good news" and urged a political solution to stabilise for the war-stricken country.

"Bashar al-Assad oppressed his people brutally. He has countless lives on his conscience and has driven numerous people to flee, many of whom have arrived in Germany," Scholz said in a statement.

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hailed the fall of al-Assad, a major ally of Iran, as an "historic day" and said it was a direct result of blows dealt to Hezbollah and Iran by Israel.

He said that Israel has seized a buffer zone in the Golan Heights established by a 1974 ceasefire agreement with Syria after Syrian forces abandoned their positions.

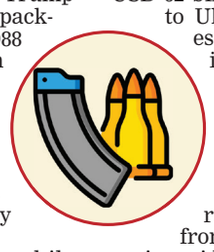
The Lebanese army said it was reinforcing its presence on the border with neighbouring Syria. "In light of rapid developments and delicate circumstances that the region is going through... units tasked with monitoring and controlling the northern and eastern borders have been reinforced, in conjunction with tightening surveillance measures," the army said in a statement. "President Joe Biden and his team are closely monitoring the extraordinary events in Syria and staying in constant touch with regional partners," the White House said. *—Al Jazeera*

Opposition fighters celebrate as they burn down a military court in Damascus, Syria, Sunday; Government soldiers and allies sit on the floor as they are taken into custody by opposition fighters on the road between Homs and Damascus; Syrian opposition fighters take selfie at the damaged entrance of the Iranian embassy in Damascus PHOTOS: PTI

US announces $1B in aid to Ukraine

SIMI VALLEY, 7 DEC

The United States has announced nearly $1 billion in additional military support for Ukraine, as Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin emphasised the urgency of delivering aid before President-elect Donald Trump assumes office. This package, amounting to $988 million, will focus on long-term weapons procurement, including drones and munitions for the High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) previously supplied to Kyiv.



Austin noted that, while these systems are essential, funding will come from the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, which aims to enhance Ukraine's future military capabilities rather than provide immediate battlefield support. This latest commitment supplements an earlier announcement of $725 million in military assistance that includes counter-drone systems and HIMARS munitions drawn directly from Pentagon stockpiles for expedited delivery. Since Russia's invasion, the US has committed over USD 62 billion in military aid to Ukraine. As tensions escalate, with Russia intensifying its attacks and employing North Korean troops in the conflict, the Biden administration is keen to utilise remaining funds from a significant foreign aid package approved earlier this year.

Austin said , "The baton will soon be passed. Others will decide the course ahead. And I hope that they will build on the strength that we have forged over the past four years." *—PTI*

Trump calls for immediate truce in Ukraine

PARIS, 8 DEC

US President-elect Donald Trump on Sunday called for an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine, shortly after a meeting in Paris with French and Ukrainian leaders, claiming Kyiv "would like to make a deal" to end the more than 1,000-day war.

In a post on his Truth Social platform, Trump claimed that Moscow and Kyiv have both lost hundreds of thousands of soldiers in a war that "should never have started".

"There should be an immediate ceasefire and negotiations should begin. Too many lives are being needlessly wasted, too many families destroyed," he said, as he called on Russian President Vladimir Putin to act to bring the fighting to an end. Trump's remarks came after a meeting Saturday with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his French counterpart, Emmanuel Macron, that Zelenskyy later described as "constructive".

Speaking to reporters later that day, Zelenskyy insisted that any peace deal "should be just" for Ukrainians, "so that Russia and Putin or any other aggressors will not have the opportunity to return".

In a separate social media update Sunday, Zelenskyy asserted that Kyiv has so far lost 43,000 soldiers since Moscow's all-out invasion on 24 February, 2022, while a further 370,000 have been wounded. Both Russia and Ukraine have been reluctant to publish official casualty figures, but Western officials have said that the past few months of grinding positional warfare in eastern Ukraine have meant record losses for both sides, with tens of thousands killed and wounded each month. *—PTI*

US president-elect Donald Trump with French President Emmanuel Macron and Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during the reopening of Notre Dame Cathedral, in Paris, France PHOTO: X

- Both Russia and Ukraine have been reluctant to publish official casualty figures, but West said that the past few months of warfare in Ukraine have meant record losses for both sides

Taiwan reports Chinese warships, balloons nearby

TAIPEI, 8 DEC

PHOTO: X

China sent 14 warships, seven military aircraft and four balloons near Taiwan between Saturday and Sunday, according to Taiwan's Defence Ministry, as Beijing ramps up pressure on the island it claims as its own. China's military activities come amid speculation Beijing might organise military drills around the island in response to Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te's recent visit to Pacific allies, including US stops in Hawaii and Guam. China claims Taiwan, a self-ruled democracy of 23 million people, as its own territory, and bristles at other countries' formal exchanges with Taiwan. The United States, like most countries, doesn't recognize Taiwan as a country but is its main unofficial backer and sells it arms. The Chinese government has pledged to annex Taiwan, through military force if necessary, and sends ships and military planes near the island almost daily. The 14 warships, seven military planes and four balloons were reported over 24 hours between 6 am on Saturday and 6 am on Sunday, according to Taiwan's Defence Ministry. The ministry said six of the aircraft crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait, an unofficial demarcation zone between Taiwan and China. *—PTI*

THE K-DRAMA

S Korea's former defence chief detained

SEOUL, 8 DEC

South Korean prosecutors on Sunday detained a former defence minister who allegedly recommended last week's brief but stunning martial law imposition to President Yoon Suk Yeol, making him the first figure detained over the case.

Yoon's presidential powers were suspended after opposition-led impeachment attempts were avoided, with ruling lawmakers boycotting a vote. The opposition Democratic Party plans to prepare a new motion against Yoon.

Ex-Defence Minister Kim Yong Hyun was detained in Seoul after a prosecutors' investigation. His mobile phone was confiscated and he was searched. A A 62-member special investigation team is being launched to investigate a marital law case. Kim's resignation was accepted after opposition parties submitted an impeachment motion against him. His involvement in martial law enforcement led to special forces encircling the National Assembly building.

People shout slogans during a rally held by conservative groups, supporting South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol PHOTO: PTI

The Democratic Party accuses South Korean President Yoon Sang-min of implementing martial law, calling it an "unconstitutional, illegal rebellion or coup." The party has filed complaints against nine people, including Yoon and Kim, and suspended three top military commanders. Yoon apologised and said he would leave it to his party to navigate the country's political turmoil. The scrapping of Yoon's impeachment motion is expected to intensify protests and deepen political chaos. Safety Minister Lee Sang-min has accepted the resignation offer.

In a parliamentary hearing on Friday, Lee, one of Yoon's closest associates, defended Yoon's martial law decree, saying the president exercised his powers "within the boundaries of constitutional processes and law". *—PTI*

Stick to fiscal deficit target, CII tells Centre

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Industry body CII has suggested the government to stick to the fiscal deficit target of 4.9 per cent of GDP for 2024-25 and 4.5 per cent for 2025-26, cautioning that "overly aggressive targets" beyond these could adversely affect India's economic growth. "Prudent fiscal management for macroeconomic stability has been pivotal to India's growth," said CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee. The CII also highlighted the announcement in the Union Budget 2024-25 to keep the fiscal deficit at levels that help reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio. *—PTI*

PHOTO: HYUNDAI.COM

Cars set to get dearer from January

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Prices of cars ranging from entry-level hatchbacks to high-end luxury offerings are set to rise as automakers have announced price hikes with effect from January. Carmakers cite an increase in input costs and operational expenses as the main reason to implement price increases from the next month. Deloitte India Partner Rajat Mahajan said the key factor for the price increase is a decline in profitability of a few large auto OEMs in the second quarter. "Rising input costs of few materials, shifting consumer preferences on advanced features but a low willingness to pay, clubbed with the pressure of supporting dealers to offset high inventory carrying costs despite high festive discounts are putting a burden on profitability," he said. *—PTI*

11 firms to launch IPOs this week, target Rs 18,500 cr

6 SMEs preparing to float their maiden public issues next week

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

The IPO market is set to be bustling next week, with 11 companies, such as Vishal Mega Mart, TPG Capital-backed Sai Life Sciences and fintech firm One Mobikwik Systems gearing up to launch their initial share sales, collectively aiming to raise nearly Rs 18,500 crore.

Other main-board IPOs to be launched during this period are Inventurus Knowledge Solutions Ltd and Blackstone-owned diamond grading firm International Gemmological Institute (India) Ltd.

Alongside the five main-board IPOs, six SMEs are preparing to float their maiden public issues next week to garner over Rs 150 crore collectively.

Together, these 11 companies aim to raise approximately Rs 18,500 crore through public offerings.

These IPOs will span various sectors and deal sizes and include fresh issues and offers for sale.

These IPOs will span various sectors and deal sizes and include fresh issues and offers for sale PHOTO: X

While 2024 has been a strong year for IPOs overall, some recent issues have struggled in the secondary market, highlighting the recurring challenge of pricing during a bull run when issuers often aim for higher valuations, he stated.

So far in 2024, 78 main-board companies, including Hyundai Motor India, Swiggy, NTPC Green Energy, Bajaj Housing Finance and Ola Electric Mobility, have mobilised around Rs 1.4 lakh crore collectively via main-board.

This was way higher than Rs 49,436 crore garnered by 57 firms through the route in 2023.

The IPOs of Vishal Mega Mart, Sai Life Sciences and Mobikwik will be open for public subscription on 11 December and conclude on 13December.

Further, the three-day initial share-sales of Inventurus Knowledge Solutions and International Gemmological Institute will open on 12 December and 13 December, respectively.

Upcoming SME IPOs are Dhanlaxmi Crop Science Ltd (9–11 December), Toss The Coin Ltd and Jungle Camps India Ltd (both 10–12 December), Supreme Facility Management Ltd and Purple United Sales Ltd (11–13 December) and Yash Highvoltage Ltd (12–16 December).

—PTI

INVESTMENT FRIENDLY

FDI inflows cross $1 trillion in 4 yrs

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

- About 25% of the FDI came through the Mauritius route. It was followed by Singapore (24%), the US (10%), the Netherlands (7%), Japan (6%), the UK (5 %) & the UAE (3%)

Foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows into India have crossed the USD one-trn milestone in the April 2000–September 2024 period, firmly establishing the country's reputation as a safe and key investment destination globally.

According to data from the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), the cumulative amount of FDI, including equity, reinvested earnings and other capital, stood at USD 1,033.40B during the same period.

About 25 per cent of the FDI came through the Mauritius route. It was followed by Singapore (24 per cent), the US (10 per cent), the Netherlands (7 per cent), Japan (6 per cent), the UK (5 per cent), UAE (3 per cent) and Cayman Islands, Germany and Cyprus accounted for 2 per cent each.

India received USD 177.18B from Mauritius, USD 167.47B from Singapore and USD 67.8B from the US during the period under review, as per the data.

The key sectors attracting the maximum of these inflows include the services segment, computer software and hardware, telecommunications, trading, construction development, automobile, chemicals and pharmaceuticals.

Since 2014, India has attracted a cumulative FDI inflow of USD 667.4B. "This investment inflow spans 31 states and 57 sectors, driving growth across diverse industries. Most sectors are open for 100 per cent FDI under the automatic route," an official said. *—PTI*

SURGING BACK

FPIs record Rs 24,454 cr inflow

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

After heavy selling in the past two months, foreign investors have staged a strong comeback to Indian equities with a net investment of Rs 24,454 crore in the first week of December amid stabilising global conditions and expectations of potential US Federal Reserve rate cuts.

This revival follows significant outflows in the preceding months, with foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) pulling out a net Rs 21,612 crore in November and a massive Rs 94,017 crore in October – the worst monthly outflow on record.

Interestingly, September had marked a nine-month high for FPI inflows, with a net investment of Rs 57,724 crore, highlighting the volatility in foreign investment trends.

This revival follows significant outflows in the preceding months, with FPIs pulling out a net Rs 21,612 crore in November PHOTO: X

With the latest inflow, foreign portfolio investors' investments have reached Rs 9,435 crore in 2024 so far, data with the depositories showed.

Looking ahead, the flow of foreign investments into Indian equity markets will hinge on several key factors. These include the policies implemented under Donald Trump's presidency, the prevailing inflation and interest rate environment, and the evolving geopolitical landscape, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director, Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

So far this year, foreign portfolio investors invested Rs 1.07 lakh crore in the debt market. *—PTI*

Mcap of 6 big firms jumps Rs 2L cr

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

The combined market valuation of six of the top-10 most-valued firms jumped Rs 2,03,116.81 crore last week, with Tata Consultancy Services and HDFC Bank emerging the biggest gainers, in-line with an optimistic trend at the Dalal Street.

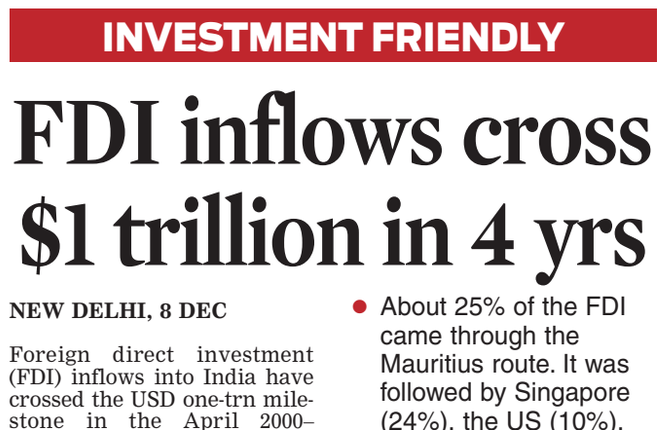
Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,906.33 points, or 2.38 per cent, and the NSE Nifty climbed 546.7 points, or 2.26 per cent.

While Reliance Industries, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Infosys, and State Bank of India were the winners from the pack, Bharti Airtel, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), ITC, and Hindustan Unilever emerged the laggards.

The market valuation of TCS surged Rs 62,574.82 crore to Rs 16,08,782.61 crore. HDFC Bank added Rs 45,338.17 crore taking its market valuation to Rs 14,19,270.28 crore. The valuation of Infosys jumped Rs 26,885.8 crore to Rs 7,98,560.13 crore and that of Reliance Industries soared Rs 26,185.14 crore to Rs 17,75,176.68 crore.

State Bank of India's market capitalisation (mcap) climbed Rs 22,311.55 crore to Rs 7,71,087.17 crore and that of ICICI Bank rallied Rs 19,821.33 crore to Rs 9,37,545.57 crore.

However, Bharti Airtel's valuation eroded Rs 16,720.1 crore to Rs 9,10,005.80 crore. ITC declined Rs 7,256.27 crore to Rs 5,89,572.01 crore. Hindustan Unilever went lower by Rs 2,843.01 crore to Rs 5,83,673.71 crore. LIC dipped Rs 1,265 crore to Rs 6,21,937.02 crore. *—PTI*



Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,906.33 points, or 2.38 per cent, and the NSE Nifty climbed 546.7 points, or 2.26 per cent PHOTO: X

PHOTO: X

'66% firms paid bribe in last 12 months'

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Around 66 per cent of business firms surveyed across 159 districts admitted that they paid bribes in the last 12 months, a report by online platform LocalCricles said on Sunday.

The survey, which received 18,000 responses, found that 54 per cent were forced to pay bribes while 46 per cent paid voluntarily to expedite the process.

"Even as many businesses would vouch anonymously, bribes remain a way of life when wanting to get government departments to speed up the permit or compliance process, even getting duplicate copy of the authority license or anything to do with property matters. Around 66 per cent of businesses surveyed paid a bribe in the last 12 months," the report said.

"Of businesses that paid bribes in the last 12 months, 54 per cent were forced to do so, while 46 per cent paid it for timely processing. This kind of bribery amounts to extortion where permits, supplier qualification, files, orders, payments are routinely held up when dealing with Government agencies," the report said.

Businesses admitted to paying a bribe in the last 12 months for qualifying as a supplier, secure quotations and orders and collect payments.

"Though initiatives like the Government eProcurement marketplace are good steps to reduce corruption, there are still openings to engage in corruption," the report said.

Firms that participated in the survey conducted between 33 May and 30 November, 2024, said that 75 per cent of the bribes were paid in departments such as legal, metrology, food, drug and health.

—PTI

26 firms sell Rs 71K cr properties in Apr–Sept

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

India's 26 major listed real estate companies have sold properties valuing over Rs 71,000 crore during the first six months of this fiscal, with Godrej Properties clocking the highest sales bookings.

According to the data compiled from regulatory filings, the 26 major listed realty firms have reported combined sales bookings of Rs 71,219 crore during the April–September period of 2024–25. The bulk of pre-sales (sales bookings) came from residential properties.

In terms of sales bookings, Godrej Properties has emerged as the largest listed player with pre-sales of Rs 13,835 crore against Rs 7,288 crore in the year-ago period.

Mumbai-based Macrotech Developers Ltd, which sells properties under the Lodha brand, reported sales bookings of Rs 8,320 crore during April-September this year.

DLF Ltd, the country's largest realty firm in market capitalisation, sold properties worth Rs 7,094 crore, followed by Bengaluru-based Prestige Estates Projects Ltd, which clocked sales bookings of Rs 7,052 crore.

PHOTO: X

Delhi-NCR-based Signature Global achieved sales bookings of Rs 5,900 crore, while Max Estates sold properties worth Rs 4,100 crore.

Bengaluru-based realty firms Sobha Ltd and Brigade Enterprises clocked sales bookings of Rs 3,188.5 crore and Rs 2,906.6 crore, respectively.

Mumbai-based Oberoi Realty did pre-sales of Rs 2,509.45 crore, while Bengaluru-based Puravankara Ltd reported sales bookings of Rs 2,459 crore.

Many listed players sold properties between Rs 1,000 crore and Rs 2,000 crore each.

Mumbai-based Aditya Birla Real Estate sold properties worth Rs 1,674 crore, and Kolte-Patil Developers Ltd clocked sales bookings of Rs 1,481 crore. Mumbai-based Mahindra Lifespace Developers Ltd achieved bookings of Rs 1,415 crore. *—PTI*

Inflation, FII to guide markets this week

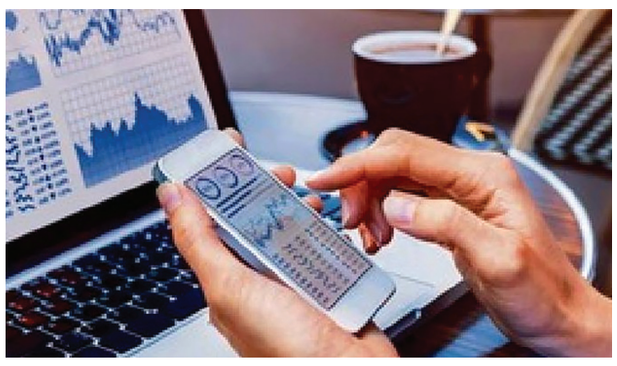
NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Investors' sentiments will be guided by a host of domestic and global macroeconomic data announcements this week, along with the trading activity of foreign investors and trends in world stocks, analysts said.

Besides, the rupee-dollar trend and movement of global oil benchmark Brent crude will also be crucial in dictating terms in the market, they said.

"The stock market is likely to be shaped by a mix of global cues, domestic economic indicators and the flow of investments from foreign and domestic institutional investors. Key factors like the rupee's exchange rate and crude oil prices will play a critical role in determining market trends.

"Globally, geopolitical tensions, particularly the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, continue to pose challenges. However, recent declines in the dollar index and US bond yields have created a more favourable environment for emerging markets like India," said Pravesh Gour, senior technical analyst at Swastika Investmart Ltd.



Investors' sentiments will be guided by a host of domestic and global macroeconomic data announcements this week PHOTO: X

On the economic front, significant macroeconomic releases, including retail inflation and industrial production data from India as well as US core CPI, are expected to influence overall market sentiment, technical analyst Gour added.

Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,906.33 points or 2.38 per cent, and the NSE Nifty climbed 546.7 points or 2.26 per cent.

"Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turning buyers in early December, in a total reversal of their sustained selling strategy during the last two months, has altered the market sentiments.

"The change in FII strategy is getting reflected in stock price movements," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said. *—PTI*

Insurance Bill unlikely in winter session

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Insurance Amendment Bill, which proposes 100 per cent FDI in the insurance sector, may not be introduced in Parliament in the ongoing session, sources said.

Some fine-tuning may be required in the draft Bill after receiving comments from stakeholders, sources said. Given the paucity of time, it is difficult to present the Bill in the ongoing session, they said, adding that it may, however, come in the Budget session.

The finance ministry has proposed to amend various provisions of the Insurance Act, of 1938, including raising foreign direct investment (FDI) in the insurance sector to 100 per cent, reduction in paid-up capital, and provision for composite licence.

Department of Financial Services (DFS) has sought public comments on the proposed amendments by 10 December. This is the second public consultation that the DFS has sought on the amendments to Insurance Act 1938, Life Insurance Corporation Act 1956, and Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999. *—PTI*

BENEFIT-ORIENTED

Kerala open to work with Adani: Minister

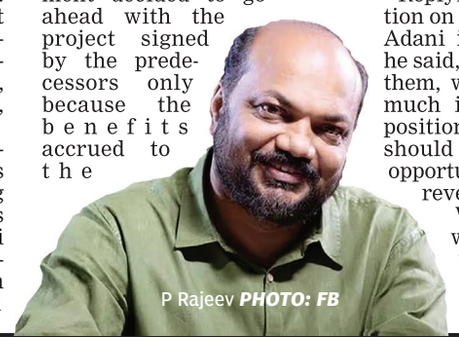
MUMBAI, 8 DEC

Kerala is not averse to discussing any new project with the Adani group and will do so only if there is a "win-win" situation which benefits the people of the state as well, a senior state minister has said.

However, the state is not keen to have any big industries which will cause pollution and ecological damage, said Minister of Law, Industries and Coir P Rajeev.

The comments from the minister come even as there seems to be some unease among southern states when it comes to dealing with the Adani group, especially after the second richest Indian Gautam Adani and others faced charges of bribing officials to secure contracts.

Rajeev said Kerala has a big investment from the Adani group in the Vizhinjam Seaport near its capital Thiruvananthapuram and added that the current government decided to go ahead with the project signed by the predecessors only because the benefits accrued to the state and its people through the ambitious transshipment port.



P Rajeev PHOTO: FB

The minister also clarified that the government is against giving any special incentives and wants to operate on its conditions.

Replying to a specific question on what changes after the Adani indictment in the US, he said, "We are working with them, we are not giving that much incentives, a win-win position should be there. It should create employment opportunities and (get) more revenue to the state."

When asked if the state will continue to engage with the Adani group even for newer projects, Rajeev said the government is open to "discuss with them", but made it clear that certain areas like privatisation in the electricity or water distribution space are strict no-go areas.

He said while the Kerala government works with the Adani group on the "gamechanger" Vizhinjam port, it opposes other projects like the move to hand over the operations of the international airport to Adani Group.

Rajeev said the state is not against big industries setting up base in the state, but ecological concerns are of prime importance for Kerala. The government will not allow polluting industries to come up, he said.

—PTI

ADANI'S SOLAR PACT CAN BE RESOLD, SAY ANALYSTS

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Adani Group's solar power contract, which is at the centre of bribery allegations, has tariffs that are lower than competition and can find new buyers in case the pact is cancelled, according to analysts.

US authorities have charged Adani Group Founder–Chairman Gautam Adani and others for being part of a scheme to offer USD 265M bribe to Indian officials to gain a contract to supply eight gigawatt of electricity by Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL).

The group has denied all charges.

"If Adani promoters are found guilty, we believe the size of potential penalty is manageable given it is up to three times the value of the bribe," Nomura said in a report.

The brokerage said there are about 1.8 Giga Watt solar projects commissioned in Gujarat from February–March 2024, with tariff of Rs 2.42 per unit under the 25-year power purchase agreements (PPAs).

These operational projects are running under five special purpose vehicles, namely Adani Green Energy Twenty Four A Ltd (AGE24AL), AGE24BL, AGE25AL, AGE25BL, and AGE26BL.

These may have project debt of about USD 685M, if assuming capex cost of USD 500,00 per megawatt and 75 per cent capex as debt. *—PTI*

Gukesh beats Ding Liren to take lead in WC

India's D Gukesh plays against China s Ding Liren in the 11th game of the World Chess Championship, in Singapore on Sunday PHOTO: PTI

BRISBANE, 8 DEC

Grandmaster D Gukesh made a huge strike forward towards becoming the youngest-ever world champion defeating Ding Liren of China in the 11th game of the World Chess Championship here on Sunday.

With just three games to come, Gukesh took the lead for the first time in the match, with the scoreline now reading 6-5 in favor of the 18-year-old Indian. History is now on Gukesh's side as no challenger in modern chess has ever scored a win after being tied 5-5 after the 10th game.

For Liren, the only comforting thing could be the fact that he had won the 12th game in the last World Championship match against Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia.

The Indian started with the Knight move on his first turn and was surprised as Liren went for a reverse Benoni opening.The move was shocking as it looked like it was an over-the-board decision rather than a planned one.

After only five moves, Gukesh had a lead of over an hour on the clock, which is never too easy for the opponent to recover in crunch games.

However, if everyone thought that the opening had gone seriously wrong for Liren, the Chinese had different ideas as he capitalized on an erroneous plan by Gukesh in the early middle game. Things turned upside down when Liren went to complete his development and missed out on a simple maneuver that would have probably given the defending champion slightly better prospects. Gukesh himself spent a lot of time in the middle game but the nature of the position remained double-edged.

As the clouds began to clear, Gukesh came up with a spectacular pawn sacrifice on the queen's side to give moving space for his rooks.

Just as he doubled them on the file to exert pressure, Liren simply crashed and made the blunder in a blink. The Chinese player was left dejected as he immediately realised the mistake. Gukesh played the winning move in quick time.

1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 d4 3.b4 c5 4.e3 Nf6 5.a3 Bg4 6.exd4 cxd4 7.h3 Bxf3 8.Qxf3 Qc7 9.d3 a5 10.b5 Nbd7 11.g3 Nc5 12.Bg2 Nfd7 13.0–0 Ne5 14.Qf4 Rd8 15.Rd1 g6 16.a4 h5 17.b6 Qd6 18.Ba3 Bh6 19.Bxc5 Qxc5 20.Qe4 Nc6 21.Na3 Rd7 22.Nc2 Qxb6 23.Rab1 Qc7 24.Rb5 0–0 25.Na1 Rb8 26.Nb3 e6 27.Nc5 Re7 28.Rdb1 Qc8 29.Qxc6 black resigned. —PTI

- With just three games to come, Gukesh took the lead for the first time in the match, with the scoreline now reading 6-5 in favor of the 18-year-old Indian.

England thrash NZ in 2nd Test to seal series

WELLINGTON, 8 DEC

Despite a stunning counterattack from Tom Blundell, who scored a resilient 115, England's all-around performance was too much for the hosts, who were bowled out for 259 in their second innings. England, already with a commanding first-innings lead of 280, had declared at 427 for 6 in their second innings, with Joe Root (106), Ben Duckett (92), and Jacob Bethell (96) contributing key knocks. New Zealand's hopes of surviving or chasing down a daunting 583 were quickly dashed as they lost four wickets early in their second innings. Blundell's impressive knock was the highlight for New Zealand, as he weathered the early storm and launched an aggressive counterattack. He shared a 96-run partnership with Nathan Smith (42) before falling to England's Shoaib Bashir, with Ben Duckett taking a brilliant catch at slip to dismiss him. England 280 (Brook 123, Pope 66, Smith 4-86) and 427 for 6 dec (Root 106, Bethell 96, Duckett 92, Brook 55) beat New Zealand 125 (Atkinson 4-31, Carse 4-46) and 259 (Blundell 115, Stokes 3-5) by 323 runs.—PTI

2nd Test: Australia thumps India at fortress Adelaide to level series

Rohit and Virat's technical problems are alarming

ADELAIDE, 8 DEC

A resurgent Australia thumped India by 10 wickets to win the second Test on Sunday and level their blockbuster five-match series 1-1 after a batting and bowling masterclass at fortress Adelaide Oval.

Chasing just 19 for victory, openers Usman Khawaja and Nathan McSweeney steered the hosts to the meager target without loss on day three of the pink-ball clash. The visitors resumed at 128-5 after their hopes were left in tatters during a final fiery session on Saturday at the hands of an Australian pace onslaught.

Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli's never-ending technical problems against both pace and spin have set the alarm bells ringing as Indian batters capitulated twice in just 81 overs to lose the 'pink ball' Test against Australia by a comprehensive 10-wicket margin on the third day, here. It was the shortest-ever Test between India and Australia in terms of balls bowled. Only 1031 balls were bowled out of a possible 2700 legal deliveries.

Starting the day at 128 for 5, Nitish Kumar Reddy's (42) cavalier approach prevented a second successive innings defeat under lights at Adelaide as India were bowled out for 175. Australia needed to score just 19 runs and they completed the formalities in just 3.2 overs.

India's second innings lasted only 36.5 overs, with skipper Pat Cummins using the short ball effectively to claim 5 for 57. Scott Boland (3/51) inflicted early damage, while Mitchell Starc (2/60) chipped in with crucial wickets.

Australia 337 (Head 140, Labuschagne 64, Bumrah 4-61, Siraj 4-98) and 19 for 0 beat India 180 (Reddy 42, Starc 6-48, Cummins 2-41) and 175 (Reddy 42, Cummins 5-57, Boland 3-51) by ten wickets —PTI

Australia's Usman Khawaja, second left, and batting partner Nathan McSweeney leave the field with Indian players at the end of the second cricket test match at the Adelaide Oval in Adelaide PHOTO: PTI

Time for India to consider replacing Rohit with Pant as captain?

Rohit Sharma's losing streak currently stands at 4-0 in India's last four matches led by the Hitman and there is no doubt that the veteran is in the twilight of his career. While there are arguments that Sharma should be dropped from the Test team given his poor form in the latter half of 2024, India is tasked with finding a new skipper for the longest format. With Rohit Sharma nearing the end of his career, India should start looking for a new Test captain, and who better to replace him than Rishabh Pant Jasprit Bumrah, India's vice-captain who also led the side in Perth. In such a case, one option that India can choose from is none other than Rishabh Pant. —PTI

BUMRAH CAN'T BOWL FROM BOTH ENDS: ROHIT SHARMA

Jasprit Bumrah is only human and cannot always shoulder the responsibility of bowling the opposition out all by himself, skipper Rohit Sharma said on Sunday, urging others to share the load with the premier fast bowler. India lost to Australia by 10 wickets in the second Test and during the Australian innings, only Bumrah stood out with a four-wicket haul. "Jasprit Bumrah cannot alone take responsibility. You don't expect him to bowl from both ends. The other guys also need to step in and share the responsibility. There will be days when Bumrah won't get wickets," Rohit said at the post-match press conference.Young Harshit Rana was clobbered for 86 in just 16 overs but the skipper was against making a two-Test youngster the fall guy for a comprehensive defeat in Adelaide. —PTI

WE LEFT PERTH IN PERTH AND SHUT OUTSIDE NOISE: STARC

Mitchell Starc, one of the architects of Australia's comeback win in Adelaide, said the hosts had left the Perth debacle behind by shutting the "outside noise" following their heavy defeat in the series-opener. A 295-run embarrassing defeat despite bowling India out for just 150 in the first innings invited criticism for the hosts from all quarters.

Living up to his reputation with the pink ball, left-arm quick Starc handed Australia a dream start by dismissing Perth centurion Yashasvi Jaiswal in the very first ball of the second Test en route to finishing with an impressive match haul of 8/108. "There was a lot of outside noise after the game but we left Perth in Perth. Cannot put my finger on it," Starc said after the end of the match. About his approach with the pink ball, he said"Nothing changes in my approach. Probably slightly fuller lengths. —PTI

Mitchell Starc

PHOTO: PTI

Tanisha-Ashwini defends title at Guwahati Masters

GUWAHATI, 8 DEC

Indian women's doubles pair Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponnappa successfully defended their title at the Guwahati Masters Super 100 badminton tournament, registering a straight-game victory over China's Li Hua Zhou and Wang Zi Meng in the final on Sunday. The top-seeded duo, who also competed at the Paris Olympics, showcased a dominant performance to outclass Li and Wang 21-18, 21-12 in the summit clash that lasted 43 minutes. The world No 16 Tanisha and Ashwini began with a bang, surging to an 8-2 lead. However, the Chinese pair narrowed the gap to 10-11 at the mid-game interval and kept the pressure on, trailing closely until 18-19. The Indian duo then held their nerves to secure the final two points and take the first game.

he second game started competitively, but the Indians pulled away with a seven-point spree, racing to a 15-6 lead. —PTI

Handball C'ship: India defeat Singapore

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

India registered a commanding 35-22 win over Singapore at the Asian Women's Handball Championship here on Sunday, opening up the opportunity for their best-ever finish in the tournament. India, who have never finished above sixth, will face China on Tuesday in the 5th/6th place playoff match. Charged by the backing of their fans, India opened the placement match against Singapore with high energy. —PTI

THREE ODI MATCH SERIES

Voll, Perry shine as Australia clean sweep series

BRISBANE, 8 DEC

Opener Georgia Voll (101) and Ellyse Perry (105) smashed commanding centuries as Australia secured a series-clinching 122-run win over India in the second women's ODI here on Sunday.

After electing to bat, Australia displayed ruthless intent, posting a mammoth 371 for 8, the highest score against India in an ODI match.

The hosts then bowled out India for 249 in 44.5 overs, wrapping up the match with ease.

"We got some partnership in between, we had a positive mindset, but we were short by a few runs," Harmanpreet said after the match.

"We created few opportunities but couldn't take them, we should give credit to them for how they batted. Australia never looked in trouble as Phoebe Litchfield (60) and Voll combined for a 130-run opening partnership that set the tone.

India batter Richa Ghosh conceded on Sunday that the team made mistakes, especially in fielding, in their big defeat to Australia in the second Women's ODI here, and promised a better show in the last match at Perth.

Annabel Sutherland was the pick of the bowlers for Australia with figures of 4/40.

Australia 371 for 8 (Perry 105, Voll 101, Litchfield 60, Mooney 56, Thakor 3-62) beat India 249 (Ghosh 54, Mani 46*, Sutherland 4-39) by 122 runs —PTI

PHOTO: X

Lando Norris wins season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix

ABU DHABI, 8 DEC

Lando Norris ended McLaren's 26-year wait for the Formula 1 constructors' title as he won the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix on Sunday. There was drama at the start as champion Max Verstappen collided with Oscar Piastri's second-place McLaren at the first corner, sending both cars into a spin. With Piastri dropped to the back of the field, that meant McLaren's title hopes depended on race leader Norris.

Norris held on for the win with Ferrari's Carlos Sainz Jr. in second and Charles Leclerc surging up to third from 19th on the grid. —PTI

U19 ASIA CUP

India lose final to Bangladesh

DUBAI, 8 DEC

The batters could not capitalize on the good job done by the bowlers as India suffered a massive 59-run defeat to Bangladesh in the low-scoring U19 Asia Cup title clash, here Sunday.After India produced a fine performance with the ball to keep Bangladesh to a mere 198 in 49.1 overs, it looked like the job was half done since the batters had played their roles to perfection since the defeat in the tournament opener to Pakistan.

However, in the crunch final, India lost wickets in a flurry on two occasions which broke the back of their chase, with Bangladesh bowlers and fielders doing their part well in exerting further pressure.

Chasing 199, India was bundled out for 139 in 35.2 overs as none of their specialist batters could play an impact knock, including the youngest IPL star Vaibhav Suryavanshi who managed a mere 9 (7 balls, 2 fours).

Bangladesh defeat India by 59 runs in final PHOTO: X / @ACCMEDIA

India suffered early blows in the form of Suryavanshi and Ayush Mhatre (1) to stumble to 24 for two inside five overs.

With the summit clash placed precariously, Bangladesh edged ahead by keeping the rest of the Indian batters largely quiet, drying up the boundaries and even the singles.

C Andre Siddarth's (20 off 35 balls) charge was ended by Rizan Hossan in the 12th over, which was another crucial point in the game as the balance tilted heavily in favor of Bangladesh.

But it was Iqbal Hossain Emon who made the most of the situation as he snaffled three vital wickets to severely dent India's hopes, accounting for KP Karthikeya (21), Nikhil Kumar (0) and Harvansh Pangalia (6) in quick succession.

Bangladesh U-19 198 (Hossan 47, James 40, Guha 2-29, Raj 2-41) beat India U-19 139 (Amaan 26, Raj 24, Hakim 3-8, Emon 3-24) by 59 runs —PTI

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Monaco close to 5 points behind PSG

PARIS, 8 DEC

Monaco got back to winning ways and moved within five points of the Ligue 1 lead ahead of its trip to Arsenal in the Champions League after beating Toulouse 2-0.

The result was a welcomed boost for the Principality side, which lost its two previous games across all competitions.

Goals from Wilfried Singo and Breel Embolo sealed Monaco's ninth win in 14 French league matches. They have a three-point lead over third-place Marseille, which travels to Saint-Etienne on Sunday. Monaco coach Adi Hütter kept his usual system but made some changes, with 18-year-old striker George Ilenikhana up front and Maghnes Akliouche, Takumi Minamino and Aleksandr Golovin behind him.

The coach also needed to find a last-minute replacement for captain Denis Zakaria, who was ruled out because of pain in his thigh. A first start of the season was handed to midfielder Eliot Matazo.

Monaco enjoyed most of the possession in the first half and had the best chances. Ilenikhana hit the right post and struck the crossbar.

Singo broke the deadlock five minutes into the second half from a set-piece. The Ivory Coast defender connected with Lamine Camara's free kick with a decisive header. Embolo made it 2-0 with eight minutes left from another header. Toulouse was in 10th place, 16 points off leader PSG's pace. PSG was held 0-0 at Auxerre on Friday.

Monaco was without U.S. striker Folarin Balogun, who last week took another hit on his recently dislocated shoulder, putting him in doubt for next week's match against his former club Arsenal. —AP

Wilfried Singo scored Monaco's first goal in a 2-0 win over Toulouse in French Ligue 1 PHOTO: X

Flick sent off for protesting penalty in Barcelona draw

BARCELONA, 8 DEC

Coach Hansi Flick was sent off for protesting a penalty decision and Barcelona was held at Real Betis to 2-2 in La Liga.

Meanwhile, Jude Bellingham and Kylian Mbappé helped Real Madrid close on the leaders.

Flick showed his frustration over a decision to send Betis to the spot, but he also said after the match that his youthful team, which included two 17-year-old starters, must improve.

"We are a young team and we need to improve a lot," Flick said. "We must be stronger, especially when we play away. We have quality, but we have to show it in every game."

Flick disagreed with the referee's decision to grant a penalty following a video review when Betis forward Vitor Roque fell in the area following a brush with Frenkie de Jong. Giovani Lo Celso converted the 66th-minute penalty to level the score after Robert Lewandowski put the visitors ahead in the 38th with his league-leading 16th goal. Substitute Ferran Torres scored from a pass by Lamine Yamal to put Barcelona back in front in the 82nd, but Assane Diao struck in injury time to secure the draw for Betis. —PTI